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Wisdom in Conduct

AN INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

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HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY, NEW YORK

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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PREFACE

THIS book is founded on a specific theory of ethics, a theory called wisdom in conduct. Such a theory demands the presentation of ethics in wider scope and more positive application than is customary in the formal, restricted conception of the subject. The book follows such a plan and the author, guided by a good deal of experience in sorting and arranging the materials of ethics before undergraduate classes, has attempted to give a critical exposition of its major tenets and problems in language intelligible to the student in the introductory college course as well as to the lay reader.

The theory of wisdom in conduct is first developed by contrasting with it, in Chapters II-V, four other, partially opposed conceptions: (a) the study of right rules; (b) the study of the good; (c) the inner life as the sole locus of ethical values; and (d) group life as the sole locus of ethical values. These four chapters are chiefly historical in their approach, designed at once to give an unbiased account of the views of various ethical thinkers, and to show the general inadequacies of those views. These early chapters must, therefore, be considered both as expository and as preparatory for the more positive analysis which is to follow.

In Chapters VI and VII, the theory of wisdom in conduct is shown to be a conception which integrates the valuable portions of the four one-sided views, and takes into account every aspect of the "total ethical situation." The treatment proceeds first historically and then systematically. Confucius, Socrates, and Aristotle are dealt with as classical proponents of the idea of wisdom in conduct, and, in the last half of Chapter VII, this idea is examined as the keynote of an ethics of situations.

The idea of wisdom in conduct is applied, in Chapters VIII-XI, to various types of ethical problem-situations in the lives of individuals and communities. These situations are divided into negative and positive types, *i.e.*, the ones requiring primarily the prevention and remedy of evils, and the ones involving principally a search for positive goods. There is a further, although not too strict, separation of the situations into those dealing mainly with conduct in personal life and those concerned chiefly with the problems of group living.

The last chapter sketches the nature of the most complete or happy life for an individual and for a community, and treats the relation of ethics to psychology and philosophy. Ethics is thus conceived as chiefly concerned with practical problems, and yet as involving deeper philosophical issues. The problem of the fuller metaphysical implications of the ethics of wisdom in conduct is one which would require another study.

I wish to acknowledge here my indebtedness to Professor Frank E. Morris of Connecticut College for Women and Professor Axel Brett of the University of Tennessee for their many valuable criticisms and suggestions concerning the manuscript, and likewise to Professor Alburey Castell of the University of Minnesota and Dr. Abraham Edel of the College of the City of New York for their valuable comments concerning the original prospectus of the book. Because of the comments of these four men, many serious pitfalls have been avoided. Of course, I take full responsibility for all of the views expressed in the book.

In addition, my thanks are due to my former teachers, Professors Warner Fite, E. B. Holt, H. C. Brown, and T. M. Greene, for such ideas as may have carried over from my study with them. Also I wish to thank my colleagues, Professors Mitchell Dreese and Stuart H. Britt, for their aid in the treatment of certain problem-situations. Professor Courtland D. Baker is to be thanked for his help with the style of the manuscript, and Professor G. M. Churchill for an extremely useful

illustration. Finally, Mr. Martin A. Roberts and his associates at the Library of Congress and Mr. J. R. Mason and his associates at The George Washington University are to be thanked for their whole-hearted co-operation in making books available to me.

CHRISTOPHER BROWNE GARNETT, JR.

Washington, D. C.

December, 1939

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Part One: Ethical Theory

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS ETHICS?

WHAT IS ETHICS?

WHEN little Johnny, aged four, is forced to forego candy or to take tonic-medicine, his study of ethics has begun, although he is not yet aware of the ramifications of the situation. When John registers for a course in ethics fourteen years later, he has of necessity already formed his ideas on many ethical questions, although some of these ideas are distinctly "private." Unlike the beginning student of "fields"—such as botany, trigonometry, or Elizabethan drama—the novice in ethics is in some regards already a specialist. John is, therefore, ready on the first day to be critical of the materials of the ethics course, if the discussion should happen to raise "his" problems or threaten "his" answers. In spite of these facts, John's mind is doubtless not made up on many ethical questions which he has already faced, and he would readily admit that there are probably other questions, distinctly ethical, which have never occurred to him. Consequently, it is quite natural for him to expect, at the outset, some kind of answer to the question: What is ethics?

The answer which this book proposes to give to this question is the following: *Ethics is the study of wisdom in conduct.* In a sense, the purpose of the entire following investigation is to show what precisely is meant by this answer. The student must be warned, however, that the full meaning can be understood only at the end. First, certain other theories of ethics must be considered. Then the idea of wisdom in conduct must be examined as formulated by its three main classical protagonists, Confucius, Socrates, and Aristotle. Then the *general* elements of wise conduct must be considered. Lastly, the *specific* meaning of wise conduct must be sought in various situations in the lives of individuals and groups. Each of these phases of this study

plays an essential part in this investigation of the question: What is wisdom in conduct?

ETHICS AND RIGHT RULES

To illustrate the scope of the problem, a different conception of ethics should be mentioned. Lying is wrong conduct, and telling the truth is right. This idea is one that the student does not encounter for the first time in an ethics class. If the conception of the absolute rightness or wrongness of certain types of conduct were stressed, ethics would become a search for right rules. In fact, this conception of ethics has been widespread for over two thousand years. Without questioning the value of veracity, the theory of ethics adhered to in this book disagrees with the general tenets of the ethics of right rules. Assuming that in most cases truth-telling is right, obviously some conduct ought to be based upon this consideration. "Did you cut down the cherry tree?" "Yes, father, I did." It is right and wise thus to reply. Here is, therefore, a case in which "right" conduct is also wise conduct. Suppose, however, that the question is, rather: Do you intend to study law? In trying to answer this question, the motto, "always tell the truth," would be of little help. In choosing a career, a young man needs wisdom in conduct, no less than in deciding not to lie. What would be the "right" answer? Perhaps he is especially fitted for law; but, again, perhaps he is not. The choice of a life-career is a problem which needs wisdom in conduct, but it is not one which can be answered by an appeal to a right rule.

Or, to give one more example: Shall Mr. and Mrs. Jones have another child? Certainly there are many factors to be taken into account. How many have they already? What is the family income? What is the condition of Mrs. Jones's health? Do they like children? There would be no one right answer to this question for all married couples; but certainly wisdom in conduct is needed in a decision upon which a possible human life, with all of its cares, joys, rights, and responsibilities, de-

pend. Ethics must deal with this type of problem. It must have something to say about many of the major issues in the conduct of life with reference to which no one would contend that there is any one uniquely right answer for everybody. Ethical study must be freed of any bonds which tend to prevent it from considering such matters as education, sickness, friendship, poverty, marriage, and industrial strife. In relation to all of these problems, ethics seeks the elements of wise conduct both in private life and in the public, social and political arena. In general, ethics is the study of the art of living wisely and well.

IS ETHICS TRAINING IN RIGHT CONDUCT?

At this point a word of caution is necessary. When a person goes to a teacher of gymnastics, he expects to be trained in work on the parallel bars or the like. When he enters a physics laboratory, he desires practice in experimental science. When he enters a medical school, he hopes for training in surgery. What ought he to expect from the study of ethics? It is natural for him to hope that he will get training in something. Most teachers of ethics doubtless hope that there will be benefits in conduct as the result of the study. If, however, ethics is not the study of "right" conduct, if by its very nature it is different from such study, obviously there is no one type of training which it envisages. In fact, for those students who expect the study to produce a set of precepts, covering all problems and cases, there will necessarily arise a certain doubt and hesitancy in conduct if no such maxims are forthcoming. However unfortunate these effects may seem to be, they are essential if the student's primary desire is to act wisely and well. In the inculcation of wise conduct there can be no training that is not self-imposed. Aristotle said many years ago that moral virtue, like all well living and well doing, is the result of practice. If the chief weakness in the search solely for right conduct lies in the limited number of situations in which any one correct answer seems possible, the chief strength in a search for wisdom lies in

the larger number of situations to which our attention becomes turned. Training in this kind of search lies, however, solely in the hands of the student himself; study can only point out various ways, and far from all of the wise ones.

ETHICS AND THE GOOD

The study of wisdom in conduct involves a consideration of many types of good men, deeds, attitudes, and feelings. Therefore problems of goodness are important in ethics. Some theorists base their teachings upon a single conception of goodness called "the good." This type of treatment must be examined with patience and respect, even though its conclusions are different from the theory of wise conduct. The good life, says Bertrand Russell, involves a happy mixture of love and reason. The good is only pleasure, experienced from moment to moment and chiefly sensual, says Aristippus, while lovers of sack and capons applaud, and sterner folk are dismayed. Throughout these and other views of "the good," there is the assumption that some special type of thing, or person, or life, or perhaps the pattern of a life laid up in heaven, as told by Plato, is of unique importance for ethics. The traditional division of people into sheep and goats is determined by "right" or "wrong" conduct, but the persons themselves are called "good" or "bad." The ethics of wisdom in conduct has no quarrel with the search for the good life, provided goodness be interpreted in a sufficiently full context to include the manifold situations needing wise conduct. All too frequently, however, defenders of "the good" consider a good man, motive, deed, activity, or thing in a relatively static, unreal context. For example, suppose that "the good life" were the unflagging experience of pleasure. What type of man is in a position to be concerned solely with the search for such a life? Eat, drink, and be merry, is more enlightening advice for a jolly Saturday night than for Monday morning's decisions at the office. Or again, suppose that goodness is (as the Stoics contend) inward tranquillity

based upon reason. When the cruel master is twisting the arm of Epictetus, the slave, or when the cares of a day's campaigning beyond the Danube cause Marcus Aurelius to feel that the world is too much with him, such advice is wise advice. But most people, in a world of anesthetics and relatively kindly fellows, are not faced with the problem of undergoing torture. Furthermore, the Emperor, as a ruler and general, faced and solved many problems which required a good deal more than inward tranquillity. Do the theories that pleasure or tranquillity is "the good" contribute sufficiently to wisdom in the kinds of conduct which most people face most of the time? The answer of the theory of wisdom in conduct which can only be developed further on in this book is, unhesitatingly, *No*. Ethics should not give us up-to-date ideas on the conduct of Monday morning's business; it does not deal solely with vocational guidance or "rules of thumb" for friendship. Yet ethics must consider the more significant problems faced by men in their careers, in their family life, and in relation to their friends, nation-states, the press, etc. While some theories of "the good life" tend in the end to arrive at results that are eminently wise, other theories of this sort, such as those referring to pleasure or to tranquillity only, seem to ignore completely most of the important and crucial ethical issues.

WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

If, then, ethics is not primarily a study of right conduct, or of the good, but of wisdom in the conduct of life, what are some of the implications of this idea? In the first place, wisdom is not the same thing as knowledge. Dynamite is a powerful explosive; this fact is a piece of knowledge. Dynamite, in itself, is bound up with neither wise nor foolish conduct, or, once a stick of it has been made, with any conduct at all. Obviously, however, dynamite may become connected with various types of conduct. Suppose, for example, it is properly used to blow up a tree stump. This use might be considered a wise use. The

wisdom in this relatively simple case of conduct would involve the skilful handling of the explosive to accomplish a useful end. If, on the other hand, the fuse used is too short, and the dynamiter is killed, it would certainly not be improper to say that he acted foolishly. If, furthermore, the dynamite is used in battle to destroy the enemy, the situation is more complex. A pacifist would say that even in this case, the use was foolish. The commanding general would call it wise. The difference would lie in the manner in which each evaluated the deed. Again, suppose a student should desire to have quantitatively as much knowledge as possible, without any reference to wisdom. He might spend his time memorizing the telephone numbers in a city directory. At the end of a few months he might be said to have more knowledge quantitatively than any of his fellows who had proceeded in a more reflective fashion. Would it not be quite obvious that all of his knowledge, far from bringing him a step nearer wisdom, actually was evidence that he was a fool?

While wisdom may not be necessary to knowledge, knowledge is one of the ingredients necessary to wisdom. Whatever else is required to make a man wise, we cannot imagine a wise man who knows absolutely nothing. Socrates, upon whose views we shall have much occasion to lean, was considered the wisest man of his day, and still he asserted that he knew nothing. This very assertion, however, was turned into evidence that wisdom implies knowledge, since he was adjudged wise in that he *knew* that he did not know. Men less wise than he are foolish on many occasions precisely because of their lack of knowledge. "I didn't mean to do it" is the perennial cry of the foolish man full of remorse when it is too late to rectify the tragic consequences of his lack of knowledge.

WISDOM AND DISCRIMINATION

In addition to knowledge, wisdom involves the ability to notice differences among the objects of knowledge. A layman

may be able to know that two pieces of cloth are silk. He may even be able to notice differences between them. The ability to notice differences is the beginning of discrimination. The connoisseur of silks is able to discriminate so exactly between the two textures of silk that he is able to work out an elaborate comparison between them. A casual drinker of wines may know vaguely that he likes a fine Madeira better than a cheap port. His discrimination is correct although rough. When Tolstoi's Stiva ordered "his" wine, the choice involved a wide experience of various types and a knowledge of their differences. The epicure is an expert in discrimination, and as such, he is nearer to wisdom than a man who has knowledge alone. In discriminating finely, a man is sometimes said to have good judgement, or to be able to evaluate well. A good judge of men must have a wide knowledge of his fellows, and this knowledge must involve an insight into differences. We might *know* that a certain rotund figure approaching is Falstaff; we would *judge* him to be rather too fond of food and drink, or less courageous than Hotspur. Discrimination or judgement concerning value is quite essential to wisdom.

In the same way that knowledge alone does not make a man wise, so knowledge and discriminating judgement are likewise not enough. A collector of butterflies may be a wise man, either as a man, or as a collector, or both. Thales, so wrapped up in the problems of astronomy that he fell into a well, may have been wise in some ways. A connoisseur of wines may be wise in his personal affairs, or in his specialty, or both. The kind of evaluation that depends on discrimination alone is likely to be quite circumscribed. Discrimination, however accurate in some special field of knowledge or practice, may be severely limited to that field. Perhaps the butterfly collector has good judgement only in regard to butterflies; perhaps he is as hesitating and foolish on other subjects as Dostoievski's idiot. Perhaps the character of Thales was more clearly shown in his fall into the well than in his meditations. Perhaps the wine specialist has

reduced his discrimination in his field to a matter of rote. Goethe tells us that the best minds are unable to do any one thing well without noticing resemblances to any other task done well. While evaluation solely in the light of observed differences is essential to wisdom, there is required, in addition, the type of evaluation which involves noticing likenesses also. This kind of evaluation is never merely the product of discrimination, but includes imagination.

WISDOM AND IMAGINATION

A wise man must be keenly aware of distinctions between people and between things, but he must also be able to notice resemblances. When discrimination is supplemented by a consideration of likenesses, judgement and evaluation are based upon imagination. Whereas discrimination alone is limited to a certain range of objects and may be exhaustive, imagination is unending because ever-widening contexts of things may be considered. The imaginative mind is like a searchlight which plays around and beyond the facts and not merely upon them. It is no accident that a creative physicist like Einstein should find himself concerned with violin playing, social theory, and other matters outside his specialty. A student of physics may follow with understanding and discernment the discoveries of Einstein and judge them to be true; it would have been much more difficult for the student to have made those discoveries himself. Discrimination may deteriorate at any point into routine observation, but imagination is always opening new possibilities. Wisdom is the outcome of knowledge, discrimination, and imagination, and culminates in evaluation.

WISDOM, AND WISDOM IN CONDUCT

A man with a fine judgement of differences and an imaginative perception of likenesses can evaluate and become relatively wise. But is the wise man always wise in conduct? The Epicureans believed that theoretical study was the way to ethical

living. They advocated a training in logic and a study of nature as assuring the truly wise way of life. However correct their instinct was in this regard, the exigencies of their times were such that only those persons who could retire to a grove of trees to work syllogisms stood any chance of following the Epicurean path to virtue; the rest of mankind were shut off from whatever practical wisdom the Epicurean sage was able to win. The exigencies of our time are similar. Scientists, philosophers, artists, and others seek types of wisdom which are, probably, inevitably the lot of the few, and which do not always bear any direct relation to conduct. The problem of the nature of the universe is the concern of the scientist, and requires much speculative wisdom, whether in astronomy, physics, or biology. The problem of the place of man in the universe is a question for the philosopher or the theoretical anthropologist, and can be answered only by the wise. Problems of beauty require wisdom on the part of the artist and the critic. To seek to relate these various types of wisdom too directly to ethical questions would be to circumscribe them unduly, however important may be some of their relations to conduct.

Unlike other types of wisdom, wisdom in conduct implies that the fruits of discrimination and evaluation carry over directly into practical living, and influence the deeds of a person. Conduct, however, is not solely or even chiefly the product of reflection, but is the expression of character, feelings, motives, and interests. Whether modified or unmodified by thought and knowledge, a man's attitudes and feelings are at the basis of his deeds. Consequently, in addition to discrimination and evaluation, a man who is wise in conduct must be a certain kind of man. He must have certain types of desires and passions; he must seek certain sorts of aims and goals. The type of person which he is initially may be quite different from the kind of person that he decides it is desirable to be. The attitudes and emotions which determine his conduct at the outset may be very unlike the ones which he subsequently appraises as wise. The

goals which he seeks early in life may be quite at odds with those which he later approves as worthy. Wisdom in conduct can arise only when he co-ordinates what he is and feels and seeks, with what evaluation shows him is worth being, worth feeling, and worth seeking. He becomes wise in conduct only when his passions become expressed in a manner which he has judged to be wise, and when his deeds are pointed towards those goals which he has appraised as valuable.

The task of achieving wisdom in conduct is, therefore, two-fold: (1) In and through experience, a man can learn which attitudes and emotions are valuable and towards which goals they ought to be pointed; (2) on the basis of this knowledge he can then seek to give expression to the feelings which he has judged to be good, and can try to direct his conduct towards the goals which he believes to be valuable. Both phases of this task are matters of application and practice. Therefore the essence of wisdom in conduct is the application of discriminating knowledge to deeds. As Aristotle put it, a man becomes morally excellent only by doing morally excellent deeds. In group living, the same considerations hold. A society lives wisely and well only if the fruits of the discriminations of its social workers, political leaders, jurists, etc., become embodied in the lives of the citizens.

Wisdom in conduct is, then, the application of the results of knowledge and evaluation to the behaviour of a person or group of persons. Can such application be merely occasional, and yet be wise? Has a man lived wisely and well who has been a murderer all his life, with sincere repentance near the end? How many of William James's moral holidays may a man take without thereby losing the claim to wisdom in conduct? How much misfortune or inactivity may be mixed with what Aristotle called living well before a man ceases to be wise? Habits are of course not unbreakable, and admit of exceptions. The genial intent of the theory of wisdom in conduct implies the absence of unbreakable rules of right. But surely,

the application to conduct of the fruits of evaluation cannot be both incidental and wise. The very essence of imagination involves (in reference to conduct) the consideration of a full span of years, and the achievement of as great an habitual application as is possible over that period. In achieving such application, there must not be a cessation of discrimination and evaluation, for if this were the case, the very existence of a habit might imply a lack of wise choosing. Leaving open the possibility of new insight, those conclusions which, after continued testing, are found to involve wise patterns of feelings and conduct should, nevertheless, be made habitual. In many types of conduct the amount of wisdom that is lost through the establishment of a habit is much less than is the amount of foolishness risked by retaining a completely open mind; for, after all, we are not speculating, but doing. There can be no assurance that wisdom has been applied to human living, until conduct embodies it to some extent habitually. Yet even wise habits may be cast aside after many years. Therefore, the test of a wise life comes at the end and not at the beginning or midway. Wisdom in conduct is, therefore, the habitual application to conduct of the fruits of knowing, discriminating, and evaluating, and this over a full span of years.

WISDOM AND PRUDENCE

At this point, the student could quite fairly ask whether what has been called wisdom in conduct might not be more aptly called prudence. Should not the term "wisdom" be limited to theoretical considerations—or, at best, to art—and the term "prudence" be used to cover those phases of wisdom which concern conduct? In spite of the fact that in some cases of conduct, wisdom is indeed identical with prudence, one of the basic theses of this study is the assertion that ethics concerns wisdom rather than prudence. The full development of the reasons for this claim lies in the subsequent scheme of this book. There is a basic distinction between negative ethical situations in conduct,

and positive ones. Suppose John Smith goes to the dentist to have a tooth drawn. He does not go there because he values the experience in itself. A person is philosophical indeed who can turn an experience with a dentist into something valued for its own sake. In fact, Smith goes to relieve the pain. The pain repels him, and therefore he wants to get rid of it, to avoid it, to remove it, to enjoy the pleasure of its absence, and to get on with his business, his studying, his golf. Suppose, furthermore, that the dentist tells him that there is another tooth which is not yet painful, but which inevitably will cause trouble unless it is removed. The reply may be: Go ahead and extract it. In this case, the patient is not trying to remove present pain, but to avoid future pain. There are in life many situations of this sort which ethics cannot ignore, in which a person's motive or purpose in acting is the prevention or removal of something undesirable. Poverty, insanity, disease, divorce, widespread crime, and a host of other conditions, great or small, attest all too clearly to the fact that many of our actions as individuals or groups are based upon the desire to prevent or remedy—in brief, to overcome—undesirable conditions or things. Such situations readily may be called negative, meaning thereby not that they are unimportant, but merely that they involve, after all, avoidance rather than a search for something of positive worth. The conditions or things which we seek to avoid are evils. It is sometimes the custom to call them negative values.

Over and above the instances of conduct in which the aim is prevention or removal, there are other cases of activity in which persons or groups are escaping from nothing. A carpenter building a house is not merely removing a blot on the landscape. An artist painting a picture (it may be hoped) is not escaping from an unhappy love affair. A student pursuing his courses is not primarily avoiding ignorance, but seeking something more positive. Many young persons choose a career not to avoid poverty, but because they wish to achieve a more positive

type of success. Although some young people enter marriage in order to solve certain problems of single life, a happy married life involves many additional aims, valuable for their own sake. A nation which tries to establish a wise government, a free press, freedom of speech, and the like, is not seeking primarily to overcome evils, but rather to guarantee to its citizens many positive goods. In general, in many situations human beings strive for things which are valuable for their own sakes, over and above any question of the prevention and remedy of evils. The task of ethics is to study both negative and positive goals in human living, and to attempt to discover what is wise conduct in both cases. In the former, wisdom in conduct is more or less identical with prudence; in the latter, prudence is not enough.

ETHICS AND THE INNER LIFE

Certain ethical thinkers, notably Lao-tse and Tolstoi, believed that ethics ought to be concerned exclusively with the inner life of the soul. Exponents of this doctrine might raise the following questions with reference to the view espoused in this book: Why should a person be wise in conduct? Is not a search for wisdom in conduct rather worldly, concerned with the avoidance of material evils such as disease, insanity, crime, and hurricanes, and with the attempt to possess such things as wealth, power, knowledge, and worldly wisdom? Does not the ethics of wise conduct ignore a person's inward spiritual condition, or what might be called the inner life or the life of the soul? Might not a man be wise in the conduct of this world, only at the price of inward spiritual impoverishment? Is not character more important than conduct?

There are implied in these questions many ideas with which the ethics of wisdom in conduct is in complete agreement. Wise conduct is not merely expedient conduct. All wise living involves a concern for character as well as for deeds. Human beings are probably more than souls, but they are likewise a great deal more than machines, or pawns in a social context or

in a material world. An inwardly excellent character is one of the necessary aims of any person who seeks to live wisely and well. Therefore, ethics is concerned with much more than a person's condition of external, material well-being.

In spite of these facts, the inner life of a person must not be considered as unrelated to all problems of external, political and social life. True inward excellence, as Aristotle said, expresses itself in excellent deeds. The wise man will not stand aloof from the world. He will recognize the obligation to use his wisdom in seeking to solve the numerous problems of family life, industrial amelioration, political justice, and group welfare in general. He will be concerned with the prevention and remedy of disease, insanity, crime, unemployment, and the like. Consequently, while ethics is concerned with the inner life of the soul, it is concerned with a great deal more besides. The inner life is not the sole locus of ethical value.

ETHICS AND GROUP LIFE

Certain ethical thinkers, notably Hegel, Marx, and Comte, believe that ethics ought to be concerned exclusively with forwarding the welfare of human beings as members of certain public, social groups. Exponents of this view frequently disagree among themselves as to which sort of group is all-important, but they unite in believing that individuals achieve their full ethical stature entirely in relation to some particular, public group, such as the state, the working class, or "social humanity." These believers in the exclusive importance of group problems might raise the following questions in relation to the view espoused in this book: Is not a person extremely selfish if he considers his own career, his own family and friends, his own education, his own sickness, and the like, when the really significant ethical problems centre in group living? Are not a person's private wisdom and foolishness relatively trivial? Should he not cultivate, above all, his ties to his nation-state, his economic class, or "social humanity"? Is not a person's

inner life coextensive with his participation in the life of one or another of these groups?

There are implied in these questions some ideas with which the ethics of wisdom in conduct is in entire agreement. Many features of group life are decidedly relevant to any persistent search for wisdom in conduct. The wise man will not become entirely preoccupied with the problems in his personal life. He will recognize the interconnection between his own inner well-being and the external welfare of other persons in the community. He will realize that a due amount of material comforts, certain basic political privileges, and a number of social benefits are at the basis of all individual ethical living. He will seek to promote these advantages in the lives of others, and in his community as a whole, no less than in his own life.

In spite of these facts, the wise man will not accept uncritically the assertions of various social theorists that any one public group—the nation-state, the working class, or humanity as a whole—is of exclusive ethical importance. He will not forget that community welfare consists merely of the advantages which individuals living in it are able to enjoy. He will recognize his own right to pursue many private personal ends related to his friends, his family, his education, his career, art, and religion. He will remember that ethical living cannot neglect the consideration of inward, personal excellence, however much it ought, in addition, to promote the external instrumentalities of life. Group life is not the sole locus of ethical value.

IS ETHICS NONEXISTENT?

There are certain fields of learning which either repudiate ethics completely, or because of an undue stress upon their own values, imply its almost complete lack of importance. Such repudiation is open in the case of modern mechanistic, behaviouristic science; it is partly concealed in the case of legal theory; it is quite covert in the case of certain extreme religionists.

In the first place, some advanced behaviourists maintain that

man is entirely a mechanically responding organism, and that any other description of him is mythical, built up deliberately and at times insidiously by religionists in an attempt to establish what might be called the "ghost-soul." Ethics is simply an ally of religion and superstition, and as such is to be ferreted out of existence by a persistent reduction of all of its components to the status of material particles responding to stimuli. More recently, this view has received support within the field of philosophy from a group called the logical positivists, who insist that no statement concerning value can be verified (apparently in a laboratory), and hence all statements in ethics are meaningless. Since these attacks upon the field of ethics are highly theoretical, and since the present study is avowedly practical, the student of ethics who happens to be curious about such speculations is asked to remember that in no sense does this book claim to have refuted the behaviourists or the logistic positivists. If, contrary to the assumptions of this book, their views are true, the indulgence of the behaviouristic student is craved during the subsequent "unverifiable" investigation. Perhaps he will find it easier to appreciate the problems of ethics, if he behaves towards this study *as if* conduct were significant, choice possible, and wisdom desirable. Surely he will admit that in practice this is the case, or is this, too, unverifiable?

In the second place, it is a commonplace that competent lawyers notice the obvious gaps in their vocation with reference to human conduct. By some jurists, ethics is benevolently called upon to deal temporarily with those loose ends of legal theory which have not yet found competent juridical treatment. Until the law is sufficiently broadened—or, so to speak, catches up with the times—ethics, they say, has a place. While it is unfair to say that all legal theorists take this attitude, nevertheless, many lawyers consider ethics to be a sort of "lyric cry in the midst of business." If the views of this book are followed through to the end, the suggestion will be found that many important problems requiring wisdom in conduct cannot be

dealt with by law, not because law has not developed far enough, but because human beings are, in certain basic situations, a great deal more than legal entities. Certainly, however, there is much wisdom in conduct embodied in law and legal theory; and it is fitting that neither ethics nor jurisprudence should attempt to explain away the other.

Lastly, the scorn with which certain religionists have looked upon "mere" ethics has rapidly decreased with the rise of modern natural science. There persists the type of theologian, however, who regards ethics as an offshoot of religion; and any repudiation of this view is apt to be taken for an open alliance of ethics with materialistic science and the powers of darkness. The ethics of wisdom in conduct is willing to risk this charge, provided it is remembered that this ethical theory involves two basic contentions: (a) Conduct is inextricably bound up with persons; and (b) persons are capable of an inner life. If such a conception of ethics must be explained away to make religious bases secure, human beings would seem to be explained away in the process. With human beings as companions the lover of ethical wisdom would be quite willing to go into exile.

CHAPTER II

THE STUDY OF RIGHT CONDUCT

THE IDEA OF AUTHORITY

THEORIES of ethics which stress the function of God, conscience, or reason in human conduct embody the idea of right rules only to the extent that God, conscience, or reason becomes endowed with the properties of authority. God and conscience are authorities only if they issue commands, and if those commands are absolutely right. God is considered as the authoritarian source of right rules in *Genesis* and in the Decalogue. Conscience is the source of right rules in the views of Joseph Butler and Immanuel Kant. All these views of ethics are unmistakably authoritarian. In theories of reason as the source of right rules, the motive of authority is not so easily discernible. Aristotle defended the rational side of human nature as an important element in a morally excellent character. He stressed a kind of "rightness" in the reasoning processes of the prudent man. In spite of this fact, Aristotle considered reason as simply one element in a much wider pattern of human conduct which includes passions, states of character, acts, and ends or goals. Also Aristotle's theory makes allowance for important differences in the outcome of the reasoning of various men. Therefore, while some elements of authoritative rightness are admittedly present in Aristotle's teachings, his views may be considered to be constructed mainly along other lines.¹ On the other hand, such various thinkers as Buddha, Plato, and the Stoics conceive of reasoning as proceeding more or less according to the formula of authority. While, according to these men, right rules do not flow from God or conscience, the processes of reason from which they do come are considered to carry with them a kind of command and a type of unique rightness. In the

¹ Cf. below, pp. 214-32.

views of all these philosophers, reason in some sense "legislates." Because of their emphasis upon such authoritativeness, the theories of these men will be treated here as samples of ethics as the study of right rules, while the views of Aristotle will be considered later.

GOD AS THE EXTERNAL SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

The motive of authority is clearly expressed in the relation of Jahveh to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In that story, Jahveh must be considered as at once a father who has the special prerogative of rewarding and punishing His children, and as a creator who has absolute power over His creatures as belonging entirely to him.² A father does not expect to have the same absolute control over the acts of a child as an artist has over his product. Jahveh looked upon Adam as an artist views his statue, and, therefore, expected absolute obedience to His wishes. We well remember the situation. Man had been created for God, and everything else in the Garden had been created for man. "Right" conduct for Adam was very simple. No labour was necessary; no tedious problems of education and schooling; no career to be chosen; no family problems; no group problems; no crime, war, disease, or pestilence; no art, literature, music, or science. The "good life" coincided with right conduct; and right conduct consisted of one abstinence—from the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. There were no other temptations and no other ethical challenges. In a word, Adam was in a state of pristine goodness; his conduct was entirely right. How much opportunity for wisdom in conduct he had is another question.

All of the elements of external authority were present. Jahveh existed actually and not merely in Adam's mind. Jahveh had absolute right and absolute power to reward and punish. Even the internal authority of conscience was completely lacking. Having only one possible wrong act before

² Cf. Warner Fite, *Moral Philosophy*, Lincoln MacVeagh, 1925, §15.

him, and not having even been tempted to perform it, Adam had experienced no qualms of conscience, and none of its praises.

The emphasis which such authoritarian morality places upon prohibitions rather than upon injunctions to positive, creative achievement, may be seen in one rather curious fact. Nowhere did Jahveh attempt to keep Adam obedient by pointing out the manifold advantages of his condition. He did not point out that Adam's life was easy, pleasant, and free from such evils as labour, disease, crime, pain, etc. The single reason which he gave for Adam's obedience was the threat of death. "On the day when thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."³ Here the motive of the avoidance of harm is used by authority for the first time as a motive for obedience. However negative and passive we may consider the life of Adam in the garden with no incentive to achieve anything by his own labour, Jahveh did not even use the promise of continued benefits as the reason for obedience, but its opposite, the threat of the removal of these benefits.

THE SERPENT AS THE SYMBOL OF CRITICAL REVOLT

The rôle of the snake in the ensuing drama is usually considered that of a complete villain. Authoritarian morality looks upon his advice as unmitigated evil. Not only did he advise disobedience, but he even suggested that Jahveh was giving a false reason for Adam's obedience. Tempting Eve, he said:

Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened: and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.⁴

From the point of view of ethics as right conduct, condemnation of the snake is quite correct. Strictly speaking, Jahveh need not have given any reason for his command. The fact that

³ *The Bible*, Genesis, II, 17.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, III, 4-5.

he was in authority meant that he was right, and that he had the power to support his command apart from any reasons valid or spurious which he might, in addition, see fit to give. If a general gives the right command for the wrong reason, is the command any less right? If a parent orders his child, Johnny, to do the right thing, the fact that the little fellow is too young to understand the true reason in no way diminishes the rightness and probably the wisdom of the order. If Johnny is old enough to expect some reason, and if the parent, therefore, gives a spurious one, so much the worse for the child if his suspicions concerning the reason cause him to suspect the rightness of the command. His *morale* may sink in the process, but his *morality* depends (at least the believers in authority would so claim) upon his obeying. In brief, all reasons are right reasons when advanced by authority.

On the other hand, can anything be said on behalf of the serpent? If Adam's life in the garden is considered to have been wholly good, then the serpent, as the personification of evil, was merely a mischief maker, and his actions are wholly to be deplored. If, however, life in the Garden of Eden is looked at from the point of view of human conduct, can it not be asked: Was Adam's life prior to the fall actually a wise one or merely prudent? Judged not from the point of view of the one forbidden act, but from the point of view of the consequences to Adam of his disobedience, can the advice of the serpent be dismissed as wholly foolish? In the first place, by the admission of Jahveh, one of the consequences of Adam's act was precisely what the serpent had foretold:

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken.⁵

⁵ *Op. cit.*, III, 22-23.

There were in the garden two trees with forbidden fruit. The first bore the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, and unless man tasted this fruit there was no danger that he would even think of trying to eat the fruit of the second, the fruit of the tree of eternal life. Upon eating the first, however, man, being one of the gods, might try to eat the fruit of the second, and the prevention of this was so important to Jahveh that he banished man, and set cherubims with a flaming sword to guard the second tree.⁶ The knowledge of good and evil, whatever were its other consequences, seems to have brought in its wake divinity⁷ and a desire for immortality. Among its more mundane consequences, Adam's knowledge, or the punishment for having it, brought the necessity for labour and the necessity for continuing to eat in sorrow the products of the soil all of the days of his life.⁸ Finally, Adam and Eve became parents for the first time, after the Fall. All these events, if not directly caused by the serpent, at least followed after his meddling.

Whatever may be the significance of these happenings, on the assumption that Adam's conduct prior to the fall was right, and his life good, this particular disobedience to authority marks the appearance of the main elements of the ethical situation, whereas prior to it, only elements of formal goodness were present. Adam's obedience was not based upon evaluation but upon ignorance. He did not *know* what was involved in the choice, for this particular choice symbolizes the beginning of all reflective ethical discrimination. Furthermore, his situation was like that of many other unawakened moral agents. He was living solely on the fruit of the labour of another. He had never eaten his own bread "in the sweat of [his] face," for he had never had the morally exhilarating experience of *work*. He was not ashamed of his nakedness, it is true, but he had not "known" his wife, and had experienced none of the joys or

⁶ *Op. cit.*, III, 24.

⁷ Milton and the theological commentators regarded this as "hybris," or imagined divinity.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, III, 17.

tragedies—or, may it not be said, moral responsibilities—of being a parent. His formal goodness was purchased at the price of almost every challenge to wisdom or foolishness which knowledge and responsibility bring in their wake. After the Fall, however, he had knowledge for the first time, and with it pain, struggle, labour, childbirth, children, and that horrible ethical situation, fratricide. Most important of all, there was awakened in Adam's breast the desire which has occupied moralists ever since, the desire for immortality. Surely this situation is full of meaning for the student who aims at wisdom in conduct.

THE DECALOGUE AS A CODE OF RIGHT CONDUCT

The same conception of God as the authoritative source of right rules is found in the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The first four of these concern primarily man's relation to God, including the observance of the Sabbath. The last six concern problems of conduct among persons.

Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.⁹

Again there is a tone of absolute command, in most cases enjoining us to refrain from some wrongdoing. In the commandments against idolatry and against taking the Lord's name in vain, there is again the threat of punishment, and in the one to honour our parents there is the promise of reward, but in the others no reasons are given. Unlike the command to Adam, the Decalogue involves some important problems in human

⁹ *The Bible*, Exodus, XX, 12-17.

living. To this extent, the commands doubtless involve prudent, and even wise, conduct. As Professor A. E. Taylor suggests: "It is not true . . . that to be morally creative or original, you must make ducks and drakes of the Decalogue. . . ." ¹⁰ It is wise to honour one's parents, although we may suspect that in merely honouring them something of a tenderer nature would be lacking. Covetousness of one's neighbour's wife or property implies at least a kind of meanness or stupidity, as Sinclair Lewis shows us so clearly in the case of Babbitt. Bearing false witness is also reprehensible.

As for the three main "don'ts," killing, adultery, and stealing: Westermarck ¹¹ has shown that various savage, semicivilized, and civilized societies, past and present, have taken almost every conceivable attitude on the matter of the rightness or wrongness of these three acts. To some savages, killing means nothing. To others parricide is a religious ritual. For many groups sexual morality, in the usual sense, is nonexistent. The Spartans, for example, considered stealing as quite proper. Faced with such facts as these, the defenders of some particular set of right rules will reply that such people are simply wrong, that they are benighted, uncivilized, unenlightened. Such an affirmation proves nothing, of course. Doubtless killing, adultery, and stealing, whether prohibited in the Decalogue or elsewhere, are—for modern, civilized persons under most conditions—quite wrong. The opponents of rigid "rightness" usually mention such examples as Jean Valjean's stealing because of hunger and despair, a man's killing in defence of his family, etc. A more general ethical problem concerns, however, not the rightness or wrongness of such acts in any absolute sense of the word, but rather their wisdom or foolishness in the circumstances in which most people encounter them. How often are most people faced with the problem of remaining a

¹⁰ A. E. Taylor, "Critical Notice on L. A. Reid's *Creative Morality*," *Mind*, January, 1938, XLVII, 185, p. 67.

¹¹ E. A. Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, Macmillan, 1906, 1908, Vol. I, Chaps. 14-18; Vol. II, Chaps. 28, 29, 42.

nonthief, a nonadulterer, or a nonmurderer? Probably not very often. Certainly much less frequently than they face a host of other problems of conduct. Only a foolish man will "make ducks and drakes of the Decalogue"; but wise conduct is not embodied in the mere observance of its precepts. These injunctions and many others in the same vein are not to be taken lightly, but the wise man will not be content to square his conduct with such maxims at the end of each day, without carrying on in addition a life of full and responsible activity. Whether the conception of ethics as obedience to the commands of God is true or false, it tells us only so much and no more. Its injunctions, if softened into the form of advice, may turn out to supply part of the wisdom needed in the conduct of life, but they will form a part only.

CONSCIENCE AS THE INTERNAL SOURCE OF AUTHORITY:

JOSEPH BUTLER

The transformation of the seat of authority from God on Mount Sinai to a modern man's inward conscience has a complex history. Plato and the Stoics, as we shall see, brought in reason as the source of right rules. The Christian thinkers in the Middle Ages considered the commands of God as flowing authoritatively through the Church as His mouthpiece on earth. These commands were not limited to spiritual matters, but involved laws for the government of particular societies and persons. These laws Thomas Aquinas called human laws. With the rise of modern nation-states many of the powers involved in lawmaking were taken over by secular authority. The external authority of the State and the Church persisted, but many matters of ethical and religious conduct began more and more to be referred to an authority within each individual, the conscience. The two most typical formulations of an ethics of right conduct based upon conscience are found in the writings of Joseph Butler and Immanuel Kant.

Joseph Butler (1692-1752), the son of a Presbyterian shop-

keeper, was born in Berkshire, England. After studying for the Presbyterian ministry, he first came into prominence in a controversy with the famous Anglican divine, Samuel Clarke. Shortly afterwards he found himself dissatisfied with the non-conformity of his own Church, and joined the Church of England. He soon received a parish, where he preached his famous fifteen sermons. Later he was made Dean of St. Paul's, and towards the end of his life he looked with increasing favour upon the forms and rituals of Roman Catholicism. His entire life was devoted to the defence of a Christian way of life, in opposition to such irreligious materialism as that of Thomas Hobbes.

Butler divides the human character into two main parts: The regulating and the regulated. The regulating part consists of three active principles: Self-love, conscience or reason, and benevolence or altruism. The regulated side consists of various passions neither selfish nor altruistic in themselves, but always directed towards objects or persons. Anger, love, hate, fear, appetite, and the like are *per se* directed towards neither the good of the individual or of others, and as such they are neither praiseworthy nor reprehensible. The regulation of these passions in the interest of one's self and others is either good or bad. Such regulation is in the main carried on by self-love or by conscience, although occasionally altruism has its say. Let us fancy, in Platonic fashion, a coach drawn by horses and having three persons on the driver's seat. One of them is a sleek, sly-looking, Cassius-like fellow. Another is a stout, pompous, magisterial-looking gentleman. The third is a rather weak-looking boy. The reins, as can well be imagined, are in the hands of the stout gentleman. He has decided the plan of the trip, although an occasional gleam in the eyes of the lean fellow suggests that he has his ideas, too. The small boy merely acquiesces in most situations. Suppose, furthermore, that they come to a fork in the road. The domineering man will decide which way to turn, even though the others disagree. When

they reach an inn in the evening and are sitting before the fire planning the trip for the next day, Cassius may be seen, however, to exercise a great influence over his obstinate-appearing companion, and in the case of a conflict of opinion may be said to win his way. He does this, of course, in a subtle fashion, always allowing his pompous friend to seem to decide.

Applying this analogy to Butler's conception of human nature, the horses would correspond to the passions. The magisterial gentleman is conscience, which always speaks with the tone of authority. The Cassius-like fellow is self-interest. The weak boy is altruism. According to Butler, there is almost never a conflict between the renderings of conscience and self-interest. Since conscience is always right and since it is a safeguard against the wrong use of the passions, its decisions work almost always in harmony with the true interest of the individual, the right use of the passions being, of course, conducive to this interest. In many cases conscience advocates altruism, but in a wider and deeper sense such altruism is always of benefit to the person practising it. How much power does conscience have, according to Butler? In a world of irrational passions, self-love, and occasional altruism, conscience frequently lacks the power to enforce its right rulings. This limitation in power, however, in no way derogates from its authority—that is, its rightness. Conscience fails to rule, not because it is not right, but because self-interest and the passions are in some cases stronger. But if conscience had as much power as it has authority, it would rule the world.

What happens in those rare cases in which self-interest and conscience conflict? If the dispute arises, so to speak, on the road—that is, in the heat of action—conscience will dogmatically exercise its power, over the protests of self-interest. If, on the other hand, the disagreement arises in the evening at the inn—that is, in a cool, reflective moment—then self-interest is apt to have its innings, and may even triumph over the right rulings of conscience. However, such occasions occur so seldom

as to be of very little importance. In Butler's opinion, right conduct, in general, as revealed authoritatively by conscience, conforms to genuine self-interest.

DUTY AS THE INNER SOURCE OF AUTHORITY: KANT

An even more rigid ethics of right conduct emanating from an inner authority was worked out by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant, the son of deeply religious pietist parents, was born in Koenigsberg, East Prussia. He attended the University of Koenigsberg, and after years of private study, chiefly of the natural sciences, became a professor at his alma mater in 1770. His main work, *Critique of Pure Reason*, was of utmost, if not revolutionary, significance in the philosophy of science. It was designed to show among other things that theoretical knowledge begins and ends with experience. For this reason, one of its momentous results was the conclusion that by purely speculative reason, the existence of God, freedom of the will, and immortality of the soul cannot be demonstrated. A story runs to the effect that Kant was walking in his garden one day after writing his book, when his old servant, weeping, approached him. Upon questioning the man, Kant discovered that the source of his distress was the fact that his master had killed and buried God by writing his famous book. Whereupon, Kant, according to the story, hastened to his study and wrote another book, *Critique of Practical Reason*, and brought God to life again. Having become deeply interested in the morality of the common man, as a result of reading Rousseau, Kant did write the second book, which is a study of ethics. In that book he based religion and religious experience upon the absolute rightness of the plain man's sense of right ethical conduct. Reversing the usual relation, Kant contends that there must be God and immortality since there is goodness, and not that we should be good because of the existence of God and a hope for immortality.

The tempo and the tone of Kant's ethics are best expressed

in his own words, found at the end of his *Critique of Practical Reason*: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: *The starry heavens above and the moral law within.*" Mme. de Staël, in a burst of romantic enthusiasm for the culture of Germany, tells us in her *de l'Allemagne* that Kant meant to compare the sublimity of the moral law to the intoxicating effects of a stroll under the stars. As Professor A. E. Taylor says, nothing could be further from the truth. The sublimity that Kant really had in mind was the perfection of the operation of the Newtonian laws of mechanics. Like the rest of his generation, Kant was overpowered by the brilliance of the achievements of the great English physicist. Unlike his contemporaries, however, Kant was probably aware of Newton's own denial that his laws were in any sense absolute or final. Kant's philosophy of science was, in a sense, designed to place the findings of Newton upon an even more absolute basis than the latter had claimed for them. Kant proposed to do this by a new and revolutionary treatment of space and time, and he believed that he had succeeded. With this belief in mind, he set out in his book on ethics to place the principles of right conduct upon an equally final basis. The result was his conception of the moral law which he asserted inspired in him the same awe as Newtonian principles. In the one case he admired the absolute rightness of mechanical motions; in the other, the similar rightness of the renderings of conscience or duty.

KANT'S CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

In developing his ethical views, Kant distinguishes sharply between conditional and unconditional commands. In ordinary life there are hosts of statements of both kinds. If you want to avoid pain, ask the dentist to use gas. If you want wisdom, study hard. If you want good government, vote intelligently. If you want to stay dry, carry an umbrella. Each of these statements involves a command, but in every case a conditional one.

One can refuse to obey any of these hypothetical imperatives by denying that the condition mentioned holds in a particular case of conduct. Since the thick-skinned patient of Bernard Shaw's dentist insists that he doesn't want to avoid pain, he will tell the dentist not to use gas. The unambitious student can reply that he doesn't want wisdom, and consequently that he will not study hard. The sophisticated citizen may reply that he doesn't want good government, and therefore he will not vote intelligently or at all. The lover of hikes in the rain will reply that he doesn't want to stay dry and hence will not carry an umbrella. In each of these cases, the command has not been disobeyed, since its statement in a conditional form allows for precisely such exceptions. Better than any of his predecessors, Kant realized that an ethics of authority cannot be grounded upon such hypothetical commands. In other words, if there is a unique source of moral insight (in Kant's view, duty, or conscience), the commands of that source need not be supported by any reasons. Since conscience is absolutely right, its unconditional command is sufficient to imply that unconditional obedience is right. In daily life, examples of such commands are: Tell the dentist to use gas. Study hard. Vote intelligently. Carry an umbrella. Right face. When such commands are given, there are no conditions attached. These commands cannot be evaded by pointing to an attached condition exempting us from obedience. If we are commanded in this fashion to tell the dentist to use gas, we have no choice save complete obedience or disobedience. If the drill sergeant commands right face, ours not to reason why; left face will not do.

Kant maintained that hypothetical or conditional commands have no place in ethics. Such commands conflict with the absolute rightness of the moral sense, and hence enable a person to have motives or reasons for obedience. Kant was particularly critical of such a view as hedonism, which holds that ethical behaviour springs from a desire for pleasure. A deed can never embody in itself the principle of rightness if it aims at any end

or result beyond the performance of the act because it is right. If duty commands, then no reasons are necessary, and all anticipated results are beside the point. If a right act is performed not in compliance with the command of conscience, but for some motive, or to achieve some end, the act, in Kant's opinion, ceases to be ethical. Conscience says: Pay your debts. If, however, a person pays a debt, not because of the command of conscience, but to avoid a penalty, his act, while *in conformity with* conscience, does not flow *from* it, and therefore is not ethical. To act morally, it is not sufficient to act *in conformity with* duty; the act must flow *from* duty. The possibility that lying does not pay is no ethical justification for refraining. If such abstention has any motive whatsoever, the act is not ethical, because it does not spring from duty alone. A soldier, in obeying the command "right face," must not even act from a desire to avoid punishment, if he would be dutiful in an ethical, as well as in a soldierly sense. It is as little moral to obey the categorical imperative from motives of self-interest or even altruism as it would be to disobey it.

Upon this basis, Kant sets up his categorical imperative as the one universal principle of right conduct. Such an imperative, as Professor Hermann Schmalenbach has pointed out, consists of two words: *Du sollst*, thou shalt. It is the broadest possible formula for governing conduct. It merely involves two ideas: The idea of command, and the idea of a complete lack of limiting conditions. How did Kant arrive at this formula, and what precisely did he have in mind? It must be recalled that Kant was full of admiration for the Newtonian principles which governed (or at least described) the behaviour of the planets and all terrestrial objects. He believed that those formulae rested upon an absolute, demonstrative basis. He was convinced that a similar basis could be discovered for ethical conduct. There was one feature of those physical laws which was doubtless present as one of the sources of Kant's awe. Those laws made no specific reference to any planet or any

material object. Any two bodies attract each other directly in proportion to their masses and inversely as the square of the distance between them; but there is no reference to what the mass of any body is, or where it is in space and time in relation to any other. All of these additional facts can be discovered only in experience by the use of scales, telescopes, observation, etc. Consequently, the Newtonian laws say nothing about any specific planet until supplemented by specific conditions, in heavenly or earthly bodies, which are discoverable only through experience. Yet when the scientist acquires sets of particular facts about bodies, these general laws are found to govern (or at least describe) them in a unique and absolute fashion.

In precisely the same sense, Kant formulated an ethical principle which in itself tells us nothing specific; namely, Thou shalt. This principle is not an explicit injunction, however categorical or however imperative, to any definite piece of conduct whatsoever. It merely means that any ethical precept must fulfil two conditions: It must conform to the general pattern of a command, and it must have no qualifications attached to it. Only when this general formula becomes applied to specific cases of ethical conduct does it take on the form in which his categorical imperative is usually stated, and only then does it govern. When so applied to human conduct it becomes: *Act in conformity with that maxim, and that maxim only, which you can at the same time will to be a universal law.*

This statement is usually considered to be Kant's categorical imperative, and in a narrow sense this is the case. Only in this form does the categorical imperative carry any possible implications for human conduct. Only in this form can it be applied to such a problem as that of lying or veracity. If we are faced with the problem of lying, we should ask ourselves, Can we at the same time will that the maxim allowing lying should become a universal law? Kant says that of course we cannot, since such a universal law would lead to chaos. Therefore we

cannot in conformity with the categorical imperative ever tell a lie. Perhaps right conduct should not proceed according to this imperative, and, in a wider sense, Kant admits that in practice such application depends upon a uniformity in the moral sense of duty in all people at all times. He would, however, add that even if such uniformity were not present, even if human beings were so variously constituted as to wreck the application of this narrower type of imperative, nevertheless right conduct *per se* in rational beings would have to conform to the more general formula: Thou shalt. This wider categorical imperative gains its truth from the very essence of rational nature. Whether, in addition, the narrower imperative operates in mankind depends upon a uniformity in men's natures. Kant himself believed that such uniformity is forthcoming, but he recognized that his contention in this regard did not rest upon the same absolute foundation as his wider treatment of the form of morality. It is possible to be a Kantian moralist by believing that a categorical imperative is essential to ethics, without believing in Kant's narrower additional account of what is right.

KANT'S CONSISTENCY

While completely out of harmony with the theory that ethics is the study of wisdom in conduct, Kant's thinking shows a consistency which is not to be found in earlier defences of authority as the basis of right rules of conduct. If ethical conduct is right conduct, and if rules of right flow from duty as an absolute inner authority, Kant is quite correct in asserting that no reasons for obedience are necessary. If Jahveh's command to Adam was right, no reason was needed, and the fact that Jahveh threatened death merely means that to this extent He departed from His unique authoritative position, and brought in another source of obedience, reason. Strictly speaking, no conditions were necessary in the Decalogue. If those commands were right, then reasoning was idle. Similarly, if, as in Butler's view, conscience is the authoritative source of

right commands, the question of any conformity of those commands with the self-interest of the individual is beside the point. Disobedience to conscience would be, according to Butler, no less wrong, even if its commands were to the obvious, genuine hurt of the person. Consequently, when Butler equated reason and conscience, he was, to that extent, departing from his authoritarian conception of morality, or at least supplementing it with a quite different view, the view that reason is the source of right rules. This idea shall be considered presently, as embodied in the writings of Plato and the Stoics. Since such a view is intrinsically different from the sterner conceptions of God or conscience as the source of right rules, Kant must receive credit for pointing out the difference and taking a definite stand in favour of the latter view, with a complete rejection of the implications of the former. From Kant's point of view, morality can only stand upon the one general idea, Thou shalt. This stand need not even lead to the further limitation that we should "act as if the maxim from which [we] act were to become through [our] will a universal law of nature." If this further limitation is made, right is still not bound to any special maxim, but is dependent upon an assumed uniformity in the renderings of the consciences of all human beings at all times.

LIMITATIONS IN THE AUTHORITARIAN VIEW

However attractive this theory of right conduct may be to severe moralists, it involves grave difficulties. In the first place, as most critics of Kant have shown, the evidence that there is a universal sense of duty in human beings is very weak. In the second place, as Professor Warner Fite has suggested, if all motives and passions are banished from right conduct, not only are selfish feelings excluded from morality, but all acts springing from sympathy, fellow-feeling, or a warm sense of friendship, or, in general, from the milk of human kindness must be classed as nonmoral. Like Plato and Butler, Kant divided human beings into a higher and a lower part, and relegated all

passions to the latter. All three men considered the chief passions to be the self-seeking, appetitive kinds which indeed frequently cause untold harm in the world. All three men consider the chief problems of ethics to be the subordination of these passions. What they forget is that the passions are also productive of much that is positive and valuable, not to mention what is distinctly wise and good. Wisdom in conduct does not glorify the passions, but neither does it condemn them indiscriminately.

Suppose, on Kant's view, we are confronted by a feeling of sympathy for an old woman crossing the street in heavy motor-traffic. If, from a motive of kindness, we spring to her aid, such an act, however exactly it may conform to duty, is not moral, since it flows from feeling rather than duty. Suppose we are tempted by an irrational love for a friend to forgive a grave offence. However in conformity with duty such forgiveness may be, it does not become moral until submitted to the authoritative gaze of conscience, and stripped of all irrational friendly feeling. A world in which such morality is prevalent would be more like a law court (minus equity and the quality of mercy), or like a drill camp, where indeed irrational feelings, however warm and altruistic, must be sternly suppressed.

Over and above these difficulties, there remains of course the objection to Kant's view which is a main thesis of this study—namely, that the commands of duty (as well as of Butler's conscience) would prescribe right answers only in a very limited number of situations in conduct. Many of the problems of education, a career, friendship, marriage and family life, as well as those of sickness, industry, war, and good government require much prudence and wisdom over and above the maxims which even the keenest and most correct conscience would have developed for such exigencies as lying, stealing, and the like. Again, even in those situations in which Kant's categorical imperative offers valuable advice, a right rule would probably emphasize a prudent escape from evils, rather than a wise search for posi-

tive goods. The categorical imperative would more likely tell us how to behave towards our physician in sickness, towards the tax collector on his annual visit, or towards the laws of our state, than how to advise a young friend concerning his studies or career or marriage. Even assuming the correctness of the renderings of the moral sense, it would, in the main, tell us how to avoid difficulties and pitfalls, rather than what goals to seek, and how to reach them.

KANT'S HUMAN IMPERATIVE

Apart from the sterner aspects of Kant's theory, there is, in addition, a warmer note in another command which he submits as a basis for right conduct—namely, what is called his practical imperative: *Act so as to use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always as an end, never as merely a means.*

There is enough wisdom embodied in this statement of Kant's to make individuals and groups much better than they are at present, if that wisdom were widely applied in conduct. Contrary to his stricter banishment of all purposes and ends from morality—in his categorical imperative—Kant here re-admits, as the ends of conduct, those ends of supreme ethical worth, human persons. Kant says that all persons are of such value that they should never be used merely as a means to our own, or any other, ends, but always as ends in themselves. If in some ways we must use human beings as means to our ends, such use is bad, and should be subordinated at every point to a consideration of their own persons and ends. If a political leader finds it necessary to use his fellow citizens to some extent as a means for bringing the whole state nearer to some desirable goal, this use of persons should be accompanied by the consideration of the value of those persons and how best to promote their individual welfare. Both in situations of personal and group living, persons ought to be treated as valuable in themselves. Kant deserves credit when, departing from his

stricter treatment of right conduct, he develops a more human account of the ethical way of treating human beings.

Even in this human imperative, Kant retains two features of his authoritarian views. In the first place, the form of the statement is still a command. The wisdom of the idea is obscured by its imperative form. Kant does not consider the possibility that the idea of treating human beings as ends in themselves is essentially a wise one, squaring at once with a strong tendency in human feelings and with the outcome of careful reflection, rather than one which must be cast in the form of a command. He neglects the possibility that conduct in conformity with the practical, human imperative may spring not from a sense of obedience, but, for example, from the love that passeth all understanding, or merely from human kindness. In the second place, he is still so influenced by the Newtonian concern for general, all-inclusive formulae, that he does not allow for the possibility that the value of human beings consists not only in their rationality, but also in those individual, personal traits which are different in each man. He overlooks the possibility that some of the phases of human nature which deserve to be treated as ends rather than means are, in Warner Fite's words, "those personal idiosyncrasies, tricks of manner and speech, and personal weaknesses (which the moralist mindful of the code of his profession will always hesitate to treat as weaknesses) which all unwittingly reveal the personal point of view."¹² In a word, for Kant the valuable part of each person is not his "self" but his humanity, which for Kant means his rationality. This wide general thing or quality which is present in us all is, apparently, identical in us all; and whatever is not identical in us all is not humanity. Human persons become reduced to the least common denominator—namely, humanity.

Now, no one should deprecate a love of humanity. When, however, such general love is put before the tendency to treat individuals as ends in their own right, a sort of universal, theo-

¹² Fite, *op. cit.*, §4.

retical type of good is likely to be stressed at the expense of the needs of persons. Tolstoi, a bit cynically, points out that the Russians who enlisted to fight for Pan-Slavism in the war between the Balkan Slavs and the Turks had been failures in the peace-time art of private living at home. Like a love of humanity as a whole, Pan-Slavism was a sufficiently general ideal to attract to its service persons who were incapable of appreciating the humanity in themselves, their families, or friends. Doubtless a genuine love of humanity is never felt at the expense of persons, and Kant meant to include individuals as deserving treatment as ends in themselves. Yet this idea may be more effectively stated by varying the Kantian formula to read: Treat *persons*, whether individually or in groups, as ends rather than as means. To become applicable to conduct, even this injunction needs considerable further specification. For not all ends are wise, nor is wisdom identical with expedient self-interest or even prudence.¹³

REASON AS THE SOURCE OF RIGHT RULES: BUDDHA

Another authoritarian conception of ethics makes the inward, rational nature of man—his right reason—the source of fixed, final rules of conduct. The most famous advocates of this view are Buddha, Plato, and the Stoics. Let us turn first to Buddha.

Prince Siddhartha (560-480 B.C.), the son of Shuddhodana, a wealthy king, was born at Kapilavastu in northern India. At an early age he married and had a child, meanwhile still living in the luxury of his father's palace. One day, according to a story, he was out driving with Channa, his charioteer, when he noticed by the side of the road a wretched fellow covered with sores. "What is wrong with him?" he asked Channa. "That is sickness; the man is sick," was the reply. Proceeding further, he saw another man all wrinkled and bent over. "What is wrong with him?" he asked. "That is old age; the man is old,"

¹³ The reader is referred, for an amplification of this view, to our general discussion of wisdom in conduct. Cf. below, pp. 233-48, 404-07.

Channa answered. Still further along, he saw a man lying cold and still. "What is that?" he asked. "That," answered the charioteer, "is death." The young prince returned to the palace in a thoughtful mood. He found himself very unhappy that night in the luxury of the palace; and he arose and left his father, wife, and child and became a beggar, wearing only rags, and living for a time on only one grain of rice a day. Instead of finding spiritual satisfaction, he found himself still discontented, and, in addition, sick. So he abandoned the life of a beggar, took food and drink, and cured his sickness, amidst the taunts and jeers of his fellow beggars, who cried out that he was returning to sensuality. Shortly afterwards he became the Buddha—that is, "the enlightened one"—as he sat under the Bodhi tree at Buddh Gaya, and he preached his first sermon in a deer park in the suburbs of Benares. The rest of his life was spent in founding and guiding an order of monks and teaching his ethical doctrines.

The views of the Buddha contain many ideas which we may readily accept as important parts of a theory of wise conduct. His abandonment of the extremes of luxury and asceticism, as well as his injunction to consider the importance both of the inward matters of the spirit and the outward problems of personal and group living, is very much in harmony with the art of wise living. His choice of a middle path between a life of sensual indulgence of the passions and a complete renunciation of all physical needs anticipates the views of Aristotle. His advocacy of the abandonment of a love of self (*âtman*) and his belief in the spreading of good deeds are important contributions to a theory of wise conduct. The crux of his ethics, however, lies in a conception of right conduct, as embodied in his famous theory of the Four Noble Truths, and it is this theory which we must examine.

This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of Suffering: Birth is suffering; decay is suffering; illness is suffering; death is suffering.

Presence of objects we hate is suffering; separation from objects we love is suffering; not to obtain what we desire is suffering. Briefly, the fivefold clinging to existence is suffering.

This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering: Thirst, that leads to rebirth, accompanied by pleasure and lust, finding its delight here and there. [This thirst is threefold] namely, thirst for pleasure, thirst for existence, thirst for prosperity.

This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering: [It ceases with] the complete cessation of this thirst, a cessation which consists of the absence of every passion, with the abandoning of this thirst, with the doing away with it, with the deliverance from it, with the destruction of desire.

This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Path Which Leads to the Cessation of Suffering: That holy eightfold Path; that is to say, Right Belief, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Means of Livelihood, Right Endeavour, Right Mindfulness, Right Meditation.¹⁴

Unlike Butler and Kant, and unlike the Decalogue, Buddha offers us a detailed programme for achieving right behaviour. While conduct itself is only one of his eight features of right living and thinking, if conduct is considered to be bound up with the total ethical situation, proceeding from, and expressing, the inner life, as well as passing over into, and involving, action, Buddha's eightfold path supplies a full answer to the problems of ethics. Possibly as a result of his own experience of luxury and ascetism, Buddha conceives all right conduct to be directed towards the elimination of suffering. Birth, decay, illness, and death are suffering. An emotional attachment to objects, persons, or to existence itself, is a form of suffering. In utterances echoed by the Stoics, he finds suffering bound up with all ties to objects, to persons whom we love or hate, and with all objects of desire, including existence. The first step in the escape from suffering lies in the recognition of its cause. The cause is desire or thirst, in the widest sense of the word.

¹⁴ J. B. Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, Macmillan, 1928, p. 21, quoting *Sacred Books of the East*, Am. Ed., IV, 95-96.

Since the self is continually reborn by the refilling of various faculties of desire (and Buddha repudiates any other conception of the self), we find ourselves desiring or thirsting for pleasure and lust, and seeking delight here and there in particular objects, persons, and situations. The three general objects of such desire are pleasure, existence, and prosperity. The next step is the understanding of the way in which the cessation of suffering is brought about; namely, by the elimination of all thirst or desire, the complete abandonment of, and deliverance from, all of the passions. Buddha's eightfold path, or code of right conduct, is the means to such complete destruction of all desire. Of the eight right ways, right belief, right-mindfulness and right meditation concern solely the inner life. Right speech, right conduct, and right means of livelihood concern our outward lives, while right aspiration and right endeavour concern both inner and outer matters. In the case of all eight, however, Buddha holds that there is one right way.

Nowhere in the fourfold doctrine does Buddha specifically mention reason as the source of the right conclusions. His stress upon right-mindfulness, right belief, and right meditation shows that there is no one source of authority, inner or outer, which commands what is right. Right conduct, widely interpreted as including all of the eight activities of body and spirit, must be won by the individual himself by thought and practice. Such a procedure is quite similar in its scope to what Plato called the exercise of right reason. Its results are not unlike those sought by the Stoics. It is true that Buddha would supplement any conception of right reason directed alone towards problems of personal and group conduct by a stress upon right belief, right-mindfulness, and right meditation. Equally emphatically, he would, however, supplement any right reason which ignores problems of human living, by a stress upon right conduct, speech, and means of livelihood. Such a stress upon the total situation, inner and outer, seems eminently wise. Yet the results of such action and attitude are, in Buddha's opinion, right or

wrong, apparently in the absolute sense which these words imply. Consequently, while there is a fulness in Buddha's ethics, in laudable contrast to the narrowness of the Decalogue or of the categorical imperative, his views remain, nevertheless, within the general framework of an ethics of right, rather than wise, conduct.

Moreover, the whole motive of the Fourfold Truths is clearly negative. Not only are birth, decay, illness, and death considered as negative values (sufferings) which should be escaped from, but likewise all passions and human ties are evil and to be shunned. Now, Buddha is quite correct in believing that decay, illness, and death are forms of suffering. It is also true that birth involves pain. But the pangs of childbirth, heralding as they do the arrival of a new human personality, surely are not to be considered as unrelated to any good. Childbirth, even with its attendant dangers and pain, is good, partly because the new person, like all people, will find himself upon the wheel of feelings and desire. Even though some of these passions will turn out to be selfish and sensual and will lead to foolish conduct with irreparable consequences, other passions will supply the motives for the attainment of some of the wisest and finest goals which human beings can set up. Thirst or passion is found in so foolish though lovable a character as Falstaff, as well as in such villains as Iago and Mephistopheles, but feelings also enable many persons to become bound to their fellows by ties of love and loyalty. These ties are, from Buddha's point of view, only subtler forms of egoism, and hence hindrances to the achievement of the eightfold path. Unamuno, a Spanish philosopher of the present day, relates the tale that one day Solon was weeping for the death of his child, when a pedant approached and asked him why he wept, if weeping availeth nothing. The wise man replied, "Precisely because it availeth nothing." From Buddha's point of view, Solon was bound up with a passion of love for his child, and therefore with suffering. A deliverance from the feelings of love and

sorrow would have taken the legislator nearer to Buddha's right path. Doubtless he, along with the enlightened one, would thereby have been more prudent, but it is an open question whether he would have been wiser. In general, if the entanglement with all passion, whether selfish, unselfish, or merely weak, is the wrong way, then obviously Buddha supplies us with valuable directions for escape. If, however, even right conduct should happen to include (without sacrificing right meditation and inwardness) a search for positive goals involving a multiplicity of ties to our human fellows, as well as a rich achievement in many activities, then Buddha's account would not be enough. Most conceptions of right conduct would seem to be bound up more or less with the kind of avoidances that Buddha had in mind, while wise conduct involves something more.

REASON AS THE SOURCE OF RIGHT RULES: PLATO

Plato was an exponent of two major conceptions of ethics: The study of right rules, and the study of the good. Here he will be considered in relation to the first theory. He was born in 427 B.C., about the time of the death of Pericles, into an aristocratic Athenian family. Professor A. E. Taylor says that for us his life history up to his sixtieth year is almost a complete blank. We know, however, that his youth was spent during those disastrous days for the Athenians beginning with their defeat by the Thebans at Delium in 424 and ending with the fall of the city to the Lacedaemonians in 404. The Golden Age of Pericles had come to an end; the greatest plays, sculpture, and architecture had been finished. At about the age of 18 Plato became associated with the elderly Socrates, and he spent several of his most formative years walking and talking with the master. With the ascendancy of Critias and Charmides to power in 404, Plato may have been encouraged to enter public life. The excesses of the Thirty may, however, have repelled him, and his dislike for Athenian politics doubtless

reached a peak when the restored democracy put his friend Socrates to death in 399. He is said to have travelled in Italy and Egypt about 395, and is reputed to have been kidnapped and handed over to a Spartan admiral, who exposed him for sale at Aegina. In 387 he founded his Academy in Athens, and from then until his death in 347 he spent the major portion of his time lecturing and administering the affairs of his school, leaving Athens only on three occasions, to visit Sicily. During the last years of his life the young Aristotle studied with him. His dialogues fall roughly into three periods: (1) Certain short dialogues were written soon after the death of Socrates, and they expounded, for the most part, the views of his master; (2) the dialogues of middle Platonism, in which the influence of Socrates is still marked, included such dialogues as the *Gorgias*, and the *Republic*; (3) the later dialogues, in which the influence of Socrates is at a minimum, included the *Philebus* and the *Laws*. Let us briefly sketch here the view of Plato, found in certain dialogues, that reason is the authoritative source of the right rules of conduct. In the next chapter, we shall deal with Plato's conception of the nature of ethical goodness.

THE RIGHT RULES OF REASON IN PLATO'S "REPUBLIC"

The *Republic* is at once the picture of a state and of a person. In seeking to describe the just individual, Plato proposes to examine various types of states and constitutions in order to discover in them the pattern of various types of individuals "writ large." In every person and in every state there are three elements: The rational, the spirited or fiery, and the appetitive. In the just man, the rational side rules, with spiritedness or fieriness as its active ally. The reason gives counsel, while spiritedness fights its battles. They unite in the control of the appetites. The harmony of these elements is at once temperance and justice, whereas any discord between the three is injustice. This harmony of the soul is based upon the right rule of rea-

son, and not upon any fear of sanctions human or divine. The poets ought not to represent justice as difficult, and worth while only because of rewards, but as a natural condition, valuable in itself. In the just state the rational men are rulers. The spirited group form the military class, and fight the battles of the rulers both against external foes, and against the gain-loving citizens, if they should try to seize control. Education in music, gymnastics, and dialectic aims to produce, in the individual, the type of just man whose reason is in control, and, in the state, the type of rulers that are rational.

The four virtues for the individual and the state are wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Wisdom concerns primarily the rational side of the man, and the ruling group in the state; wisdom is knowledge by virtue of which the whole man or the whole state is considered. Courage is the power to preserve the right and lawful beliefs in the individual or in the state concerning what ought, and what ought not, to be feared. In the individual, courage is based upon the proper "tightening" of the spirited side, under the guidance of right reason, to avoid what Aristotle later called undue rashness or temerity. The courageous person is able to conquer both the dangers of excessive appetite and of external force. In the state, courage is based upon a well-trained and disciplined military group under the guidance of the rational rulers. The courageous state is able to conquer both internal uprisings and external foes. Temperance consists in the ordering and control of certain pleasures and desires, in such a way that a man is master of himself. In the temperate individual, reason allows the appetites neither excessive nor insufficient expression with reference to their proper objects, nor any expression at all in relation to the wrong ones. In the temperate state the gain-loving people—artisans, farmers, tradesmen, and the like—are allowed the proper exercise of their trades or crafts under the surveillance of the rulers. Justice, the determination of which is the main problem of the *Republic*, requires that each part of the populace, or class of the

state, shall mind its own business. Justice is a harmony of the whole based upon a functional division of labour. In the just individual, the rational side exercises rule while the spirited fights on its behalf, and the appetites are bent to temperance by the reason. In the just state, the philosopher-kings rule, the soldiers fight their battles, and the gain-loving class is allowed by the rulers to seek economic goods temperately. Injustice in an individual involves the usurpation by one side of the functions of another. In the state, it means, similarly, the meddling of one class with the pursuits of another. In both cases, injustice is a process of degeneration. Does a just state exist on earth, the Platonic Socrates is asked?

No [he replies], but perhaps it is laid up in heaven as a pattern for him who will see, and seeing [will] found a city in himself. Whether it exists anywhere or ever will exist is no matter. His conduct will be an expression of the laws of that city alone, and of no other.¹⁵

These teachings form the cornerstone of the Platonic ethics as a theory of the rules of right conduct and of the nature of the good man and the good life. Plato affirms the autonomy of the reason of the individual. Reason at once prescribes the rules of right living and reveals the pattern of the good character. This conception must be viewed with respect by every student of ethics. If the theory of wisdom in conduct turns out in the long run to be stated in different terms, this in no sense means that its conclusions are totally divergent from Plato's.

RIGHT REASON VERSUS REASONING

In what measure must Plato's views in the *Republic* be regarded as embodying the idea of authority, and to what extent do they anticipate the conception of wisdom in the conduct of life towards which our investigation is pointing? This question is by no means an easy one, for the conception of reasoning is

¹⁵ *The Republic of Plato*, translated by Lindsay, Everyman's Library, Dutton, 1926, §592.

linked with both views.¹⁶ Yet Plato's ethical doctrines cannot be treated fairly unless this question is answered. In general, the issue hinges upon two modes of conceiving of reason; namely, as right reason, and as the process of reasoning. Right reason implies that there is a set of answers to the problems of human living which can be discovered by the mind prior to, and cut off from, the life of the passions and the arena of personal and group conduct. Somewhat like conscience, the right reason of a man possesses the correct formula for conduct at the very start. Granting the very existence of right reason attending to its own specific business of ruling, a wise pattern of life is assured. On the contrary, the processes of reasoning which are defended in this study as intrinsic to wise living arise in and through the experience of the passions and the deeds bound up with them. Reasoning is identical with the processes of discrimination and evaluation which grow out of past practice and serve to modify future conduct. Consequently the answers to the problems of conduct which reasoning yields are not available to a person before he acts, but are forthcoming only when the process of reasoning is influenced by the fruits of past practice. Only in and through conduct, including trial and error, is the process of reasoning capable of yielding any answers, however right or wrong.

In the second place, right reason is able, because of its unique rightness, to issue its conclusions in the form of commands. It is essentially a rule which may or may not carry over into practice but which remains a rule even when it is broken. While right reason is not the type of rule that speaks with the dogmatism of Jahveh or conscience, while it may be to some extent the outcome of antecedent reasoning, once its rightness is established its manner of expression is fundamentally authoritative. The fact that the fiery or appetitive sides of a man may revolt against its authority in no way diminishes the rightness of the neglected command. On the other hand, the process of reason-

¹⁶ Cf. below, pp. 234-35, 240-41.

ing is very different. It is essentially noncoercive. Since genuine reasoning is identical with careful discrimination and evaluation, a person fails to act upon its fruits at his own risk. If a person sees the better and chooses the worse, so much the worse for all concerned, but true reasoning offers no promises of reward or threats of punishment other than those implied in the competing values. Reasoning throws light upon the alternative modes of behaviour; it does not attempt to force a choice. A person may choose to follow or not to follow its gentle insight, but reasoning never tends to establish a rule over him. In a word, reasoning is, as the word literally implies, a search for genuine reasons. It is open-minded and tentative, willing to accept whatever truths manifest themselves. "I am still," says the Platonic Socrates, "what I always have been, a man who will listen to no voice but the voice of the reasoning which on consideration I find to be the truest."¹⁷ Here, indeed, Plato is defending reasoning rather than a rule of right reason.

In the third place, right reason, like the categorical imperative, presupposes both a simplicity and a uniformity in the problems of conduct which confront human beings. Since reason is right, it prescribes the same path for everybody, and the same path for one man all of the time. The right mode of life for all citizens of the ideal state is prescribed by the guardians. They legislate and regulate as they see fit, and patterns of living which other citizens may favour are rejected as harmful to the whole state. Similarly, in an individual character, the right mode of living is adopted by the reason frequently over the protest of the irrational feelings. On the other hand, reasoning, as linked with discrimination and evaluation, gives no assurance prior to practice that there is one right mode of life for everyone in a community, or even for one man in various different circumstances. Lacking any final evidence of one right way of living, reasoning must take into account a multiplicity of dif-

¹⁷ Plato's "Crito," in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, translated by Church, Macmillan, 1923, §46.

ferences in human character and in the various situations in personal and group living in and through which the wise ways are to be sought. There is no antecedent certainty that reasoning will find one right pattern of life or one uniform mode for everyone. Only to the extent that there are uniformities in human nature—passions, hopes, fears, dreams—and in human situations—poverty, crime, education, family life, and government—only to this extent will wise living conform to one right model. While this possibility must not be overlooked, it is to be sought, not by right reasoning, but by looking for common, discernible elements and values in various characters and situations.

Bearing in mind these differences between right reason and reasoning, it would probably be doing Plato an injustice to assert that his views embody exclusively either the one conception or the other. Yet in the *Republic* his stress upon the rule of reason is sufficiently noticeable to justify considering his position as to some extent an advocacy of the authoritarian view. While this fact is, in the opinion of some students of Plato, a source of his strength, it would seem to indicate a limitation in his position, not unlike parallel flaws in the ethics of Kant, Buddha, and the Stoics.

Plato's authoritarian view is quite marked both in his treatment of the ideal man and the best state. In the case of the individual, a major concern of the rational side is the subjugation of the passions. While a harmonious relation between the reason and the passions is, in Plato's opinion, very desirable, there is a sharp division between the rational side which legislates, and the passions which are controlled. When co-operation between the ruling and the ruled sides is impossible, the former has the task of subduing the latter and bending it to the right way. This control has all of the earmarks of authority, imposed from without upon unruly, self-seeking feelings. Plato ignores the possibility that some human passions are quite different from the types which need to be dominated in this fashion by

the kingly side of a man. He assumes without question that, in an individual, all passions are either fiery and hard or appetitive and soft, but in any event quite selfish. A natural passion of altruism or fellow feeling, as conceived by Shaftesbury, is assumed to be completely lacking in human nature. According to Plato, human character includes no feelings of personal tenderness, parental or filial devotion, friendship, or kindness. All such feelings are melted by Plato either into self-seeking appetite or self-assertive spiritedness. In human beings thus constituted, reasoning would indeed be forced to adopt the tone of authority on many if not all occasions.

In the case of the state, the authoritarian motive is even more noticeable in Plato's doctrine. A leading concern of the group of rational, ruling guardians is to take measures adequately to protect the state from external assault and internal revolt. Both dangers can be effectively met only by rigidly controlling both the army and the masses of gain-loving citizens. While co-operation between the rulers and the ruled is highly desirable, there remains a wide gulf between them. The former have broad political powers, while the latter are forced to acquiesce unconditionally in all matters affecting the life of the whole group, and in most phases of personal life as well. When co-operation between the governing group and the governed is impossible, the former have the right and duty to take ruthless steps to secure obedience. The somewhat concealed authority of an individual's reason over his passions is replaced on the larger canvas of Plato's state by unrestrained authoritarianism. All citizens save the ruling guardians are either high-spirited, honour-loving soldiers, or appetitive, gain-seeking artisans, farmers, and tradesmen. These groups (not to mention the slaves) are by nature purely and blindly selfish, in either an aggressive or a grasping manner. In a state composed only of such citizens, the personal ties, family life, friendship, private philanthropy, etc., would count for very little, quite apart from Plato's specific, elaborate programme designed to replace

all private sentiments and ties by an absolute loyalty to the state. Citizens who manifested only a love of honour or of gain would indeed require the authoritative coercions which Plato favoured. Whether needed or not, however, the authoritative enactments of Plato's rulers would fall heavily upon the citizens. Education is prescribed and carried out by the government. Family life is broken up and a community of wives instituted, no child being allowed to recognize his own parents. Children are segregated and educated according to their demonstrated "golden," rational nature, their "silver," soldier-like ability, or their baser "iron," "copper," "bronze," etc., appetitive tendencies. The poet is crowned with garlands and banished; music is severely censored.

Plato nowhere records among his citizens the presence of the type of inward goodness of heart which defies all metallic comparisons. There is no kind-heartedness or fellow feeling among his guardians, soldiers, or gain-loving groups. We may charitably assume that his theory of a community of wives is not intended to be taken too literally; yet that conception suggests a barnyard type of life quite repugnant to believers in monogamous marriage. In general, Plato's faith in the rightness of reason caused him, in formulating his official views, to overlook the inner, spiritual (not spirited or fiery) feelings which sometimes reside in the hearts of men, and which received perhaps their most challenging expression in parts of the New Testament. He allowed himself, in his advocacy of strong political power, to become quite intolerant of the rights and interests of large groups of gain-loving, appetitive, but probably none-the-less quite kind-hearted citizens. Intent upon insuring the welfare (as he conceived it) of the whole state, he would subject soldiers and citizens to a rigid rule of authority in every detail of their lives. Careful breeding, strict laws, and close public supervision of all matters of education and private living are, he believed, essential to his political programme. Tender feelings on the part of the rulers or citizens are to be discour-

tenanced, lest in a moment of weakness a guardian allow some spark of parental or filial love to generate a family loyalty which would of necessity infringe upon an absolute allegiance to the state. A kind-hearted ruler might be tempted to allow children to recognize and live with their mother and father. He might allow a "golden" child (that is, a child with potential rational ability) to remain with his "bronze" (that is, gain-loving) parents. He might find himself pitying the fair maiden whom he was awarding to the bravest soldier. In a word, he might come to recognize some of the inner values of soul, which Plato, despite his use of the term, did not have in mind.

REASON AS THE LEGISLATOR OF RIGHT RULES IN PLATO'S "LAWS"

Plato's other ideal state, sketched in his last work, the *Laws*, is constructed along lines which in some regards are more genial and humane, but are chiefly more rigid and authoritarian, than those of the *Republic*. Believing that trade and commerce are in large measure responsible for the conflict of one state with others, and hence for the need of military power, he locates his ideal state inland, and stresses much less the need of military virtues among the citizens. He retains his prejudice against the gain-loving activities of trade and barter, and forbids the citizens to engage in any of these, but he is more tolerant in regard to drinking and appetitive enjoyments. While contending that a state in which everything is the property of everybody would be ideal, he admits that such a state is beyond the capacities of human beings, and allows private property in his new state. Within this general framework he elaborates many highly suggestive ideas on education and statesmanship. The highest art of all he calls the choral art, and its inculcation is the purpose of education. It consists of the two features of music and dancing. Music in turn consists of two parts: Exercise in the motions arousing and awakening rhythm, which is the dance; and exercise in the melodies arousing and awakening rhythm; namely, song. When the dance is "extended and pur-

sued with a view to the excellence of the body" it is gymnastic. A leading function of the state is the furthering of all of these phases of education.

In this state, the laws are to be based upon reason.

May we not conceive each of us living beings to be a puppet of the gods. . . . [The] affections in us are like cords and strings, which pull us different and opposite ways, and to opposite actions; and herein lies the difference between virtue and vice. . . . There is one among these cords which every man ought to grasp and never let go, but to pull with it against all the rest; and this is the sacred and golden cord of reason, called by us the common law of the state; there are others which are hard and of iron, but this one is soft because golden; and there are several other kinds. Now we ought always to co-operate with the lead of the best, which is law. For inasmuch as reason is beautiful and gentle, and not violent, her rule must needs have ministers in order to help the golden principle in vanquishing the other principles. . . . The individual, attaining to right reason in this matter of pulling the strings of the puppet, should live according to its rule; while the city, receiving the same from some god or from one who has knowledge of these things, should embody it in a law, to be her guide in her dealings with herself and with other states.¹⁸

Here Plato reaffirms in apparently gentle terms the right rule of reason. In opposition to harsh passions, its rule is kindly, but it remains a rule, and must vanquish opposition. The purpose of all education is to train citizens in such rationality and law. The same love of reason, however, if not attainable by fair means, should be attained by any means whatsoever. Suppose a citizen should err to such an extent as to affirm that the just life is the pursuit of pleasure. ". . . I would inflict the heaviest penalties on anyone in all the land who should dare to say that there are bad men who lead pleasant lives, or that the profitable and gainful is one thing and the just another. . . . Shall we say that glory and fame, coming from gods and men, though

¹⁸ Plato, *Laws* (Jowett's translation), Clarendon Press, 1892, §§644-45. By permission of the Jowett trustees.

good and noble, are nevertheless unpleasant, and infamy pleasant? Certainly not, sweet legislator.”¹⁹

The problem uppermost in Plato’s mind is not whether the just life is a search at all cost for gain and pleasure, and not whether infamy and evil are not perhaps after all profitable, but rather whether it is *right* that such ideas should get abroad in the ideal state. Severe punishment rather than gentle remonstrance ought to follow the spreading of such ideas, even if they should be (what Plato considered to be impossible) correct. It may be asked quite fairly, however, whether it is quite so obvious that evil men do not prosper. Why should Plato’s legislator be so readily agreed with when he asserts that vice does not pay? The fact that the stress in Plato’s mind is not primarily upon the truth but upon spreading “right” opinion may be seen all the more clearly when he advocates one of his “noble lies” in defence of the “right.”

Then the unjust life must not only be more base and depraved, but also more unpleasant than the just and holy life? That seems to be implied in the present argument. And even supposing this were otherwise, and not as the argument has proven, still the law-giver who is worth anything, if he ever ventures to tell a lie to the young for their good, could not invent a more useful lie than this, or one which will have a better effect in making them do what is right, not on compulsion but voluntarily. . . . [There is a] story of armed men springing up after the sowing of teeth which the legislator may take as a proof that he can persuade the minds of the young of anything; so that he has only to reflect and find out what belief will be of the greatest public advantage, and then use all his efforts to make the whole community *utter one and the same word in their songs and tales and discourses all their life long*.²⁰

Quite apart from the question of whether an unjust life is a pleasant one, Plato’s defence of right reason has sunk to a low ebb, when it is based no longer upon the evidence but upon the

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, §§662-63.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, §§663-64. (Italics ours.)

fact that the young can be made to believe anything. If governing in the interests of the whole man or state, whether the ideal military state of the *Republic*, or the ideal autarchical state of the *Laws*, implies the necessity of spreading any fable or palpable lie which the right reason of the legislator deems to be beneficial, we have abandoned all pretence that rightness is bound up with the renderings of reasonings as such. In fact, the legislator who will resort to such tactics may be condemned as unwise if not plainly unscrupulous. Moreover, the uniformity of the voices of the citizens—and in modern times of the press—in mouthing his “songs and tales and discourses” would merely bear witness to the tragic effects of regimentation, even in the name of the right. At least Adam’s unquestioning obedience could not masquerade as the outcome of reasoning, but Plato would have us become puppets not openly and knowingly but persuaded that our caperings are rational.

Nor is such a use of “right reason” advocated solely in dealings with individualistic pleasure lovers. Plato advocates a combined use of persuasion and power in the regulation of all public matters, and in relation to almost every conceivable problem of personal life. The conduct of courtship, marriage, family life, public meals, procreation, and the care of children is in all cases to be subjected to the intrusive gaze of the legislator or some of his subalterns. A nocturnal council of old men is to dispatch hosts of young “spies” to pry into every matter of conduct, thought, and attitude of the harassed citizen. A modern nation in war-time, with conscription, censorship of the press, regimentation of industry, food, habits, clothing, and ideas, would be very much like Plato’s state at any time. And all such regulation would be carried on in the name of rationality, because reasoning precedes the command. The laws and regulations are to carry what Plato calls persuasive preludes. In these the purpose is hortatory only. They are intended “to create good will in the person [to] whom [they are] addressed, in order that, by reason of this good will, he might more intel-

ligerly receive [the] command, that is to say, the law.”²¹ If possible, the citizen is to be put into the frame of mind in which he will approve of the law and freely follow it. If, however, these gentle, hortatory preludes should fail to accomplish their purpose, they are to be followed with relentless force and punishment. The appeal of reason is backed at every stage by the presence of authority. Willing acquiescence is desirable, but obedience, willing or unwilling, is to be obtained. Any person who may refuse to plan his married life in accordance with the ideas of the rulers is to be severely dealt with. Any person who may have other plans for the education of his children than those of the overseers will be penalized accordingly. Reasoning is merely the first and more desirable way of obtaining regimented obedience, but other ways are available if necessary.

The effect of such impending punishment would doubtless influence the extent of the agreement of the citizen with the hortatory preludes to the laws. A man who can reason his way to the conclusions of authority may, nevertheless, have freely reached those conclusions. Wise conclusions may coincide with authoritatively right ones. The chances of ulterior motives entering into, and influencing, one's thinking are certainly not diminished, however, by the spectacle of punishments for arriving at one result and rewards for arriving at the opposite. Not every citizen of Plato's state would have the courage of Socrates in reaching his own conclusion in the face of the laws. Most people probably find it more difficult to profess an honest opinion honestly arrived at, if that opinion is forbidden by authority. Little courage is required to believe in God when confronted by an inquisition. Little courage is needed to believe in democracy while living in one, and little bravery to believe in absolute rule when confronted by a dictator. In the days of the Inquisition many believers remained admittedly quite uninfluenced by fear. Likewise, sincere reasoning may lead today to the very convictions regarding democracy or totalitarianism

²¹ *Op. cit.*, §723.

which happen to be accepted by one's group. Nevertheless, once the spectre of authoritative coercion raises its head, the chance of genuine reasoning leading to the illegal conclusions becomes diminished. The extent of the power displayed behind the hortatory preludes to Plato's laws will determine, in the case of every citizen save the brave Socratic type, the extent to which fear *may* influence the result. Some citizens will be genuinely convinced by the reasoning. More honour to them for actually following reason. Others, however, will merely appear to be convinced. If the threat of force lies back of every word of the legislator, the chance of the reasoning becoming merely pseudo-persuasive is great, apart from its intrinsic reasonableness.

If by any chance a recalcitrant citizen should not agree with the reasonings of those in authority—that is, with the persuasive preludes of the laws—Plato prescribes a series of punishments which today would be considered highly vindictive unless applied only to the perpetrators of the worst crimes. The ideal state has two prisons, one near the meeting house of the nocturnal council, where those persons are kept who have erred more through ignorance than through wrong reason and intelligence. For the latter, incurable type, there is a prison far inland. Upon the death of certain stubborn atheists after years of languishing in prison, their bodies are to be cast unburied beyond the confines of the state.

There is one interesting passage in the *Laws* which indicates not merely the severity of the legislator, but even of the Athenian speaker to his two companions who have "rationally" assented through some twelve books of authoritative persuasiveness.

Athenian: "And can anyone have a more exact way of considering or contemplating anything than [in] being able to look at one idea gathered from many different things?"

His listener, apparently nodding, replies, out of key:
"Perhaps not."

After which slip, authority speaks:

"Not 'Perhaps not,' but 'Certainly not,' my good sir, is the right answer. There never has been a truer method than this discovered by any man."²²

The ethics of reasonableness has degenerated into senile presumptuousness, brooking not even a half-hearted assent to the words of the legislator. Jahveh and the categorical imperative at least recognized their own dogmatism, but Plato's lawmaker remains to the end convinced that he is following reason. All of the gentleness is gone from the golden cord, and in its place there is the harsh jerk of authority.

THE AUTHORITY OF REASON IN STOICISM

Another group of ethical writers who teach the unbending rule of right reason are the Stoics. Aristotle is ignored in this connection not because his ethics is entirely free from the idea, but because his views represent one of the earliest formulations of the more tolerant and humane attitude of ethics as wisdom in conduct.²³ While he speaks, in places, of the insight of the prudent man as uniquely revealing right conduct, nevertheless this contention is supplemented by a wider sweep of ideas. The Stoics, on the other hand, unreservedly took their stand with Plato on these matters.

Zeno (342-270 B.C.), the founder of Stoicism, was the son of a Phoenician trader probably of Semitic extraction. He went to Athens when quite young, and was strongly attracted by the teachings of Antisthenes and the Cynics. Those teachings involved chiefly a rejection of pleasure as in any way connected with the good, and Stoicism became at once a study of right conduct and an uncompromising opponent of sensuality. Because Zeno met with his group in the Stoa Poecile, a colonnade, the word Stoa (porch) became attached to them. After his death the school was carried forward by Cleanthes and

²² *Op. cit.*, §965.

²³ *Cf.* below, pp. 214-32.

Chrysippus, and spread throughout the Roman world, numbering among its more famous adherents Seneca, Cicero, Epictetus the slave, and Marcus Aurelius the emperor. We shall consider here the Stoics' stand on the question of right conduct, and in the next chapter their analysis of the good life in general.

Those are duties [Diogenes Laërtius tells us the Stoics held] which reason selects to do, as for instance, to honour one's parents, one's brothers, one's country, to gratify one's friends. Those actions are contrary to duty which reason does not choose; as, for instance, to neglect one's parents, to be indifferent to one's brothers, to shirk assisting one's friends, to be careless about the welfare of one's country, and so on. Those are neither duties nor contrary to duty which reason neither selects to do, nor, on the other hand, repudiates, such actions, for instance, as to pick up straw, to hold a pen, or a comb, or things of that sort.²⁴

Here we find clear-cut distinctions between moral or right conduct, immoral or wrong conduct, and unmoral conduct which is neither right nor wrong. Right reason shows clearly into which category an act falls. Unlike Plato, who was mainly interested in the state, the Stoics were concerned chiefly with the ethics of individuals. Although a person should consider his country when reasoning about conduct, he must also pay attention to problems of personal life, including his relations to parents, brothers, and friends. Reason remains the authoritative source of correct answers to problems involving our dealings with others, but the matters coming under its survey are personal as well as group. The authoritative touch of the state-builder or political legislator is entirely lacking. This shift may be accounted for partly by the fact that the Stoics were supremely interested in the rational principles pervading the universe and every part of it, including man. Living in conformity with these principles is, according to them, right living; and the authoritative guide to such living lies in the reason of each

²⁴ Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives and Opinions of Famous Philosophers*, translated by Yonge, Bell, 1909, Book VII, p. 299. By permission of G. Bell & Sons.

individual. Therefore, Stoicism is concerned with social matters chiefly in so far as they bear directly upon the inward, rational well-being and tranquillity of the individual. The later Stoics, in particular, superimposed upon this idea the injunction to active, social achievement; but all Stoics, whether *in* or *out* of the world, did not become *of* it. Epictetus the slave and Marcus Aurelius the emperor were avowedly indifferent to all matters save the rational principle within. In the face of every test and trial which an irrational world could impose, they remained inwardly firm and aloof. They fulfilled the duties of their stations, but they rejected all irrational ties whether personal or political.

The earlier Stoics probably laid claim to a greater ability in achieving right living than did the later; at least, such ability was afterwards ascribed to them by their admiring successors. Diogenes Laërtius says of them:

Moreover, that they are free from all error, in consequence of their not being prone to any wrong actions; also, that they are unconnected with injury, for that they never injure anyone else, nor themselves. . . . They also affirm that they are not pitiful, and never make allowance for anyone; and that they do not relax the punishments appointed by law, since yielding, and pity, and mercifulness itself, never exist in any of their souls, so as to induce an affectation of kindness in respect of punishment; nor do they ever think any punishment too severe.²⁵

If a Stoic sage is relentless in applying his rational rules to the conduct of others, at least it may be said that he is equally pitiless in applying them to himself, and would expect others also to be so. In the opinion of old Mr. Osborne in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, the fact that a man who has ruined himself on the stock exchange happens to be a close friend whose daughter is engaged to his son—happens, in fact, to be the man who years before helped Mr. Osborne to get his own business start, in no

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, Book VII, pp. 303-04.

way justifies relaxing towards him the stiff code of business conduct in which he, Mr. Osborne, has been trained, and according to which he is himself quite ready to sink or swim. As in Mr. Osborne's case, the line between stern, right dealing and sheer vindictiveness is on occasions hard to draw. A young twentieth-century Stoic with Calvinist background once remarked that if a person should deserve the penalty he would first knock him down and then raise him again and convince him that such chastisement had been right. The order of application of rational persuasion and punishment has in such a case perhaps been reversed, but the result is certainly Platonic and Stoical. The assumption underlying all such righteous indignation and just severity is the same that underlies all authoritarian ethics: Right justifies might.

Marcus Aurelius advocates the same principles when he says:

In one respect man is the nearest thing to me, so far as I must do good to men and endure them. But so far as some men make themselves obstacles to my *proper* acts, man becomes to me one of the things which are indifferent, no less than the sun or [the] wind or [a] wild beast.²⁶

Right principles, according to the great emperor, require him to do good to men, any passion of benevolence being of course out of the question. Such right action brings men near to him. In addition they are occasionally, and possibly often, near to him merely because he has to endure them. When, however, in the pursuit of proper—that is, right, rational—conduct, some poor, irrational man stands in the Stoic's way as an obstacle, he becomes for the Stoic exactly like a stick or a stone or a beast, and is to be dealt with accordingly. As harsh as this idea sounds, it draws its sole sustenance from the assumption that the conduct in question is proper, and that reason can reveal this fact. Tolstoi's sensualist, Vronski, riding on the train to Saint Peters-

²⁶ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, translated by Long, Bell, 1919, V, 20 (italics ours). By permission of G. Bell & Sons.

burg and meditating on his chances to commit adultery with Anna Karenina, was doubtless not following the Stoic's train of reasoning as he stared at his companion in the compartment, but the effect was the same.

He looked at people as if they were things. A nervous young man, a clerk in a law court, sitting opposite him, hated him for that look. The young man asked him for a light and entered into conversation with him and even pushed against him, to make him feel that he was not a thing but a person. But Vronski gazed at him exactly as he did at the lamp, and the young man made a wry face, feeling that he was losing his self-possession under the oppression of this refusal to recognize him as a person.²⁷

In some situations, an impersonal attitude towards people is doubtless prudent and unavoidable. If, for example, a criminal is brought into court, the nature of his offence may indeed be such that he has forfeited all right to be treated as an end or as a personality. An extreme paranoiac with homicidal tendencies is treated as a free person only at great peril to himself and others; he must be locked up. In personal and group conduct, many rules must be accepted as right in an unqualified sense. Individuals who break laws justify at once certain rigid modes of treatment along Stoical lines. Yet the necessity and expediency of a rule of conduct does not make it wise. The wisdom of a law or a mode of handling an insane person depends upon the ends aimed at. Such ends are wise only to the extent that they are the product of reflective evaluation. To attempt to justify them merely because, in the given circumstances, they are necessary, is very different from valuing them in the name of wisdom. The spectacle is all too common of a Stoical moralist, ancient or modern, unnecessarily divorcing his proper ends from any quality of mercy. In many cases, the sight of such a person treating his fellows with perfect assurance as mere obstacles to his right conduct merely causes less confident moral-

²⁷ Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina*, Garnett's translation, Grosset and Dunlap, c. 1925, Part I, Ch. XXXI.

ists to suspect the nature of his ends. After the condemnation and sentencing of a criminal as conscientiously as possible, a jury and judge must have no further doubts if they wish to sleep well. It is easier to admire than to envy the man who must make the punishment fit the crime, or even the criminal.

The crux of the Stoic ethics of right conduct comes in the sharp line which is drawn between virtue and vice.

As a stick must be either straight or crooked, so a man must be either just or unjust, and cannot be more just than just, or more unjust than unjust; and the same rule applies to all cases.²⁸

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

This doctrine is the logical outcome of authoritarian ethics. An ounce of wrong conduct is as bad as a ton. One moral holiday makes a man profligate. Of all the views of right conduct, this one is the most unbending. Authority may in every other case temper justice with mercy. Grace is possible for the Christian; even the erring Kantian or Platonist may receive another chance, if he has not slipped too far. For the Stoic, however, it is all or nothing. In a world with as many foolish persons and groups as ours, it is to be hoped that the Stoics are, on this point, not only foolish, as they seem to be, but also quite wrong.

SUMMARY

We have now briefly surveyed several main ethical teachings which unite in interpreting all conduct exclusively in terms of right rules. In the story of Adam and Eve, as well as in the Decalogue, God is considered to be the source of these rules. In the views of Butler and Kant, they emanate from the individual's conscience. Buddha, Plato, and the Stoics, on the other hand, believe that they flow from right reason. While no formal refutation of these conceptions has been attempted, the sug-

²⁸ Diogenes Laërtius, *op. cit.*, Book VII, p. 305.

gestion has been made that they are all relatively limited in their scope and suggestiveness. In general, none of them makes room sufficiently for the processes of individual discrimination, evaluation, and choice. The Decalogue and the theories of conscience even banish all reasoning; while Plato's views and those of the Stoics equate the processes of genuine, open-minded reasoning with an antecedently established, authoritative right rule that is all the more dogmatic because it masquerades as the product of reflection. Genuine reasoning is indeed the basis of ethical choice, for it involves the processes of knowing, discriminating, and evaluating. But right reason is quite different. Knowing the answers, it yields one set of principles more or less authoritatively given and dogmatically commanded. Finally, the study of right rules is an inadequate conception of ethics chiefly because the types of situations and conduct which fall within its scope do not include many of the major problems which confront human beings. Right rules are rather easily discernible regarding such matters as stealing, lying, murder, etc. They tell us very little concerning such questions as childhood play, education, poverty, marriage, crime, and good government. The ethics of wisdom in conduct shall be concerned more specifically with some of these latter problems. It gives respectful heed to the problems of morals—stealing, lying, etc.—but it is concerned chiefly with a wider view of morality.

CHAPTER III

THE STUDY OF THE GOOD

GOODS VERSUS THE GOOD

BETWEEN "a" and "the" there is a vast difference of emphasis and meaning. A man of the hour may be one among others, but *the* man of the hour is unique. A favourite actor is not *the* favourite. A king is not *the* king. A president is not *the* president. "Good" is a positive value adjective, applicable to people, things, relations, types of conduct, and sometimes taking on a substantive meaning. Squire Allworthy is a good man. Food, shelter, and clothing are goods. Joy, sympathy, and friendship are also goods. The deeds of the Buddha were good.

In each of these contexts, the opposite of goodness is a negative value, evil or badness. Blifil is a thoroughly bad man. The lack of food, clothing, or shelter is bad. Sorrow, antipathy, and hostility are in many cases bad. The deeds of Iago or Mephistopheles are evil. In general, goodness and badness, positive and negative values, permeate almost every aspect of human living, referring to character, feelings, deeds, objects, goals aimed at, and the persons or groups of persons affected.

In the widest sense, ethics is the study of the various goods in all of these phases of human conduct. In other words, ethics is, in a general way, the study of goodness or goods found in what shall be subsequently called the total ethical situation.¹ The aim of this chapter is to examine a type of theory which involves a one-sided treatment of ethical values. Certain thinkers, realizing the importance of goodness in human life, have sought to interpret all ethical problems in terms of this one conception. This procedure would, in itself, imply no narrowness, if account were taken of the goodness of character, feelings, deeds, things, groups of persons, and ends or goals. The particular students of

¹ Cf. below, pp. 233-36, 244-48.

goodness to whom we refer, however, do not undertake any such wide investigation. They restrict their conception in two ways: (1) They ignore all complexities of character and conduct in persons and groups, focussing their attention entirely upon the ends, aims, or goals towards which human deeds are directed. Even this restriction would not rule out a consideration of major ethical problems if the nature of the ends, aims, or goals of human living were treated in a sufficiently comprehensive manner. Widely construed, the aims of conduct include considerations of character, feelings, deeds, and the objects or persons affected by those deeds. But these students of goodness restrict their study still further: (2) They construe every end, aim, or goal of human conduct in one single pattern, and centre all goodness in this one mould or model. All other, apparent, goals in human conduct, they contend, reduce without remainder to this one type. All other, apparent, types of goodness become merely examples of this one kind. The result is no longer a theory of goods or goodness, but a theory of *the* good. This chapter will examine several major examples of this one-sided approach to ethics: (1) The good is pleasure. (2) The good is a kind of self-sufficiency achieved by the entire absence of pleasure. (3) The good is a mixture of pleasure and intellect. (4) The good is power. These theories are selected as typical of the defences of the existence of one unique type of goodness.²

ARISTIPPUS: HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

Aristippus (435-356 B.C.) was born in Cyrene, a flourishing Greek colony in Asia Minor. Attracted by the fame of Socrates, he went to Athens at an early age and soon became a practising Sophist, accepting fees. He claimed that he derived his teach-

² The ethical studies of the good which we shall examine must not be confused with the metaphysical theory of an ineffable realm of "essences," pure forms, or general principles, underlying, permeating, or transcending all things. The student is referred to one or two short treatises on general philosophy, if he desires to understand this latter doctrine. Plato, *Phaedo*; G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge, 1902, pp. 1-37; C. E. M. Joad, *Guide to Philosophy*, Random House, 1936, Chapters X, XI. Cf. below, pp. 120-22.

ings from Socrates, but when he attempted to give Socrates some of his earnings he apparently met with a rebuff. At times Aristippus was wealthy enough to keep slaves, but at other times he was the fawning favourite at the court of Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse. Diogenes Laërtius' anecdotes about the Cyrene, while possibly not to be taken too literally, show us at least the implications which the ancients read into his theories. He was ready at any time to choose the cowardly or the degrading course of action rather than the honourable one. He was not the least bit offended when he was called the king's dog or a slave in the palace of a tyrant. When someone abused him, he merely went away.

Once it happened, that when he was sailing to Corinth he was overtaken by a violent storm; and when somebody said, "We common individuals are not afraid, but you philosophers are behaving like cowards," he said, "Very likely, for we have not both of us the same kind of souls at stake."³

He apparently grovelled before the tyrant when he was asking for a favour, on one occasion prostrating himself before the ruler and on another allowing him to spit in his face. Moreover, he took no pride in his masculinity, using perfume and donning a woman's garb to dance before the guests of Dionysius. He pursued a life of selfish sensuality with women, living indiscriminately with courtesans and showing brutal indifference towards a pregnant mistress and her illegitimate child.

The teachings of Aristippus represent the clearest and most uncompromising statement of the theory that the good is the pleasant (hedonism). There are "two emotions of the mind, pleasure and pain . . . the one—namely, pleasure—[is] a moderate emotion; the other—namely, pain—a rough one. No one pleasure [is] different from or more pleasant than another; and . . . pleasure [is] praised by all animals, but pain avoided.

³ Diogenes Laërtius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, translated by Yonge, Bell, 1909, p. 83. By permission of G. Bell & Sons.

. . . The proof that pleasure is the chief good is that we are from our childhood attracted to it without any deliberate choice of our own; and that when we have obtained it we do not seek anything further, and also that there is nothing which we avoid so much as we do its opposite, which is pain.”⁴

Three features of this theory must be carefully distinguished from one another: (1) The pleasures which constitute the good are all of one kind. (2) The observed fact that human beings (and animals) seek pleasure is ground for correctly evaluating pleasure as the good. (3) The search for pleasure is always egoistic; each person seeks pleasure for himself rather than for others. Each of these ideas must be further explained.

In the first place, Aristippus and his Cyrenaic followers held that no one pleasure is different from or greater than another. What did they mean? Let us imagine a pile of copper bars, each bar exactly like every other one, their sole difference being that some are shorter than others. They would all be of one kind and merely different in size. Similarly, the Cyrenaics meant that all pleasures are of one kind and that as far as their quality is concerned one of them is the same as another. Pleasures differ only quantitatively—that is, in intensity and duration. Consequently the only ground for seeking one pleasure rather than another would be the greater intensity or duration of the one. But bodily pleasures are of greater intensity than mental ones. Therefore, “corporeal pleasures are superior to mental ones, and corporeal sufferings worse than mental ones.” This truth is demonstrated by the fact that offenders are punished with bodily pain rather than with mental anguish. The good, according to this conception, is a maximum of pleasure, judged mainly by its intensity rather than by its duration, and hence chiefly to be found in bodily sensation. To get the most pleasure, “gather ye rose buds while ye may.” “Eat, drink, and be merry.” Because of its emphasis upon the amount of pleasure, this theory is sometimes called “quantitative” hedonism.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

In the second place, the Cyrenaics used the fact that human beings seek pleasures as evidence that pleasures may be correctly evaluated to be the sole good. What is the difference between the fact and the evaluation? To put this question more clearly, let us fancy a tropical island inhabited by savages of a very strange type. These queer fellows, let us say, spend their time looking for only one thing; namely, cocoanuts. Whether or not they find any, they do not desist from their search. A theory of the sole good for these savages might dismiss as irrelevant the consideration of whether cocoanuts are really valuable, and merely notice the fact that cocoanuts are what the savages call good and persist in seeking. Similarly, a theory of hedonism may shun all evaluation (normative judgement) and merely contend that the good which human beings actually seek is pleasure only. Such a theory would not be an ethical conception at all, but merely a description, accurate or inaccurate, of what men pursue and *call* good. This type of theory is sometimes called "descriptive," "constitutive," or "psychological" hedonism.

Aristippus did not have in mind this type of hedonism. He held that men seek pleasure, but from this fact he drew a conclusion which involved evaluation. Men pursue pleasure, hence pleasure is the good—that is, pleasure can be correctly evaluated to be the good. What did Aristippus mean? Let us turn our attention once more to the fancied island. Suppose a civilized visitor to the island were to discover that cocoanuts are really the only valuable objects on it. He would see that the good is really cocoanuts, whether or not a single islander is seeking these. He would *evaluate* cocoanuts as what the good really is, quite apart from the question of what the savages are pursuing. Similarly, most hedonistic theorists contend that pleasure is the solely valuable end, aim, or goal, whether or not, in fact, anyone seeks it. This kind of theory of the good is avowedly ethical—that is, based upon an evaluation (normative judge-

ment)—and not merely a description of human conduct. This type of hedonism is sometimes called “ethical” or “normative” hedonism.

But ethical hedonists also contend that in fact what men seek is genuinely indicative of what can be correctly evaluated as the good. Hence the Cyrenaics, as well as all other ethical hedonists, hold that the fact that men pursue pleasure is evidence that the good is the pleasant. In other words, they use descriptive hedonism as the basis for evaluating the good as pleasure.

In the third place, the Cyrenaics held that the good is pleasure for the individual seeking it. While some hedonists admit that the good is pleasure for one’s self *and* for others, Aristippus and his followers described the good entirely in egoistic terms. The good for me is my pleasure and not that of other people. The Cyrenaics admitted that my pleasure may arise from the fact of the prosperity of my country, but this pleasure remains mine, and is to be sought for this reason. Any altruistic activities which I happen to undertake have as their end my own pleasure. In addition, pleasure is not merely an absence of pain, for the latter condition is not unlike sleep. Likewise, there are no pleasures of anticipation or recollection. All pleasures are either present facts or nonexistent. This description of pleasure is sometimes called egoistic hedonism, in opposition to altruism or utilitarianism.

Before leaving the views of Aristippus, there is one question to be raised in regard to them. In the midst of his description of Aristippus’ life of sensuality, Diogenes Laërtius says: “[Aristippus] gave admirable advice to his daughter Aretes, teaching her to despise superfluity.”⁵ One of the supremely ethical questions which a man may face is what kind of man or woman he wishes his child to become.⁶ This question does not imply any unique ability on the part of parents to guide their children by precepts, however great this power may be in the case of some

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁶ Cf. Warner Fite, *The Platonic Legend*, Scribner’s, 1934, p. 308.

parents. In any event, one of the ways in which many parents influence their children towards wise or foolish courses as well as towards the resulting wise or foolish types of character, is by example. Remembering how unimportant Greek daughters may have been to much less avowedly selfish fathers than Aristippus, would Aretes remain entirely unaffected by her father's ideas and practices? What kind of person did she become? While no answer to this question is possible, we may wonder whether one piece of advice, however admirable, coming from a father whose life was spent in continuous selfishness, could have had any very great influence upon a young girl. Hedonism, as well as other theories of the good, may be expanded to take account of the manifold problems arising in regard to the conduct and character of one's children. However, such considerations play, as a rule, almost as small a rôle in these theories as considerations for the welfare of Aretes probably played in the life of Aristippus. Possibly he never asked himself what his daughter's fate might be in a world of men like himself. If this question had occurred to him, what would have been the effect upon his theory that his own momentary pleasures are the sole good?

THE GOOD AS INTELLECTUAL PLEASURE: EPICURUS

Epicurus (341-270 B.C.), the son of an Athenian emigrant, was born at Samos. In his eighteenth year he went to Athens as a student, but in the following year the Athenian settlers were expelled from Samos, and Epicurus joined his father in Colophon. In 310 he taught at Mitylene and Lampsacus, and in 307 he opened his famous Garden School in Athens. This school flourished under a continuous succession of Epicurean leaders for five hundred years, making its influence felt throughout the Greco-Roman world. The most eloquent expression of the Epicurean philosophy is found in Lucretius' poem *De Rerum Natura*. By his enemies, Epicurus was considered "a most profligate man in his morals"—a charge which defenders of pleasure run the risk of incurring, however blameless their

personal lives may be—but most people believed rather in “the unsurpassable kindness of the man to everyone.” In his will, Epicurus made careful provision for the continuation of his school and for the care of his surviving colleagues and their children. The guardians of the daughter of Metrodorus were charged to provide her with an adequate dowry and to aid her in making a prudent marriage.

The Epicurean philosophy rests upon the theory that the universe is a fortuitous concourse of atoms. Even the human soul is but a configuration of material particles. Epicurus advocated the study of the nature of the physical world and of the character of physiological processes chiefly as a means to ethical living. A major aim of these investigations was to rid the human mind of superstition and a fear of death. When we fear death, it has not yet arrived. When it has come, there can be no sensation and hence no pain. Therefore, a fear of death is foolish. The wise man frees himself from this irrational fear by understanding that death means the end of all experience whatsoever. While we may question the amount of tranquillity which such reasonings will procure for a person who is experiencing the death of friends or close relatives, nevertheless for the passionless sage they may be wise enough.

The main contention of the Garden School was the theory that the good is the pleasant.

No pleasure is intrinsically bad; but the efficient causes of some pleasures bring with them a great many perturbations of pleasure. . . .

Every pleasure is therefore a good on account of its own nature, but it does not follow that every pleasure is worthy of being chosen; just as every pain is an evil, and yet every pain must not be avoided. . . . When, therefore, we say that pleasure is a chief good, we are not speaking of the pleasures of the debauched man, or those which lie in sensual enjoyment . . . but we mean the freedom of the body from pain, and of the soul from confusion.⁷

⁷ Diogenes Laërtius, *op. cit.*, p. 475, XXXI, 7; p. 471, XXVII.

The implications of this hedonism can be most clearly seen in contrasting them with the views of Aristippus. While the latter held that all pleasures are of one kind, Epicurus drew a sharp line between sensual indulgences and intellectual delights. The search for pleasure begins with a distinction between the two different kinds. To understand Epicurus' meaning, let us imagine another pile of metal bars. In this pile there are, let us say, various kinds of metals—copper, bronze, tin, iron, silver, and gold. The bars are longer or shorter, but in addition they are of various types. Let us fancy that all of these metals are sorted into two smaller piles, the copper, bronze, tin, iron, etc., being put in one, and the gold and silver in the other. The result would be two piles of metals, each containing longer or shorter bars of various kinds, the first containing various metals, all baser, the second a few metals, all finer.

Similarly, according to Epicurus, there are the various baser, bodily pleasures, which are types of motions or perturbations, but also there are the finer pleasures of the soul which are sometimes states or conditions. While both types of pleasure are good in their own nature, the sage realizes that the pleasures of sensuality are purchased at a heavy cost. Ruffled by a perturbation which is pleasant, possibly also suffering because of attendant and subsequent pains, the soul loses the tranquillity which is essential to all intellectual delights. Furthermore, sensual pleasures, though more intense, do not endure as long as the intellectual. Consequently, in spite of the essential goodness even of sensual pleasures, the sage rejects these in practice because of their brevity and because they bring with them physical pains and a confusion of soul which cuts it off from the finer, more enduring intellectual pleasures. The ideal of the wise man is the freedom of the body from pain and of the soul from confusion. This condition makes possible joy and cheerfulness. This theory is sometimes called "qualitative" hedonism.

In spite of the basic difference between the sensual hedonism of Aristippus and the intellectual hedonism of Epicurus, the

views of the two men have two features in common. In the first place, neither man is merely describing the good or goods which men seek, and they are both evaluating or passing a deliberate normative judgement upon the nature of the good. Pleasure, of one sort or another, is the good, aside from the question of whether men actually seek it and it only. Indeed, Epicurus realized full well that most people do not seek the type of pleasure which he equated with goodness.

In the second place, apart from the different manners of life of the two men, both Aristippus and Epicurus defended a self-centred type of hedonism. Just as the pleasure which constitutes the good, in Aristippus' opinion, is my own sensual pleasure, so the pleasure which is unqualifiedly good, in the view of Epicurus, is my own tranquillity, my freedom from bodily pain, my experience of the delights of the soul as I retire to the cool of the garden. The altruism in Epicurus' own life was aside from his egoistic theory of the good.

HEDONISM IN MODERN TIMES: HOBBS

The views of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) of Malmesbury, England, are a major example of hedonism as merely a description of what men actually seek. Unlike his Greek predecessors and his nineteenth-century successors, Bentham and Mill, Hobbes was one of the few hedonists to state the theory merely as a description of human behaviour, rather than as an evaluation of what is genuinely good. Brought up by an uncle, Hobbes went to school at Westport Church and at Magdalen Hall, Oxford. For the rest of his life he was employed intermittently as a tutor in the Cavendish family. At about the age of forty he became interested in science and philosophy, and in 1634 he became acquainted with Galileo and Mersenne, the friend of Descartes. He became greatly impressed with the success of the new mechanistic physics in describing the behaviour of the stars and terrestrial bodies, and tried to apply similar mechanical principles to the thoughts and actions of human beings. He de-

scribed the individual as a mere bundle of self-seeking appetites and aversions, and the conduct of groups of individuals as determined solely by selfishness and the fear of arbitrary political power. His *Leviathan*, in which both phases of his theory are discussed, serves, therefore, at once as the basis for his hedonistic, descriptive psychology, with which we shall here deal, and his defence of absolute political power. The good, as sought by the individual, is merely the pleasant, and, in relation to others, it is unqualified obedience to the sovereign. These doctrines were not popular in England with the rise of the people's party under Cromwell, and Hobbes fled from the country. Even after the Restoration, when he found himself again in England, his views were opposed as atheistic and no new editions of *Leviathan* were allowed in that country.

Hobbes begins his psychology by reducing all of the objects in the external world, as well as all of man's mental life, to sensations and the data—or, as he calls them, phantasms—revealed by these. In turn, sensations are all derived from motions in a way not unlike what is today called a sort of stimulus-response arc. In animals, including man, there are two kinds of motions: Vital, such as the course of the blood, pulse, breathing, etc., and animal, such as the activity of going, speaking, and moving our limbs in a manner first fancied by the mind. Such fancying by the mind is itself merely the remainder of past sensible motions. The small beginnings of all such motions are endeavour.

This Endeavour, when it is toward something which causes it, is called *appetite*, or *desire*. . . . And when the Endeavour is from-ward something, it is generally called *aversion*. . . .

That which men Desire, they are also said to *Love*: and to *Hate* those things, for which they have Aversion. . . . But whatsoever is the object of any mans Appetite or Desire; that is it, which he for his part calleth *Good*: And the object of his Hate, and Aversion, *Evill*.⁸

⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Everyman's Library, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York; Part I, Chap. VI.

Whereas Aristippus and Epicurus, however much they differed about the good, both considered that they were making a critical evaluation of what *is* good in the nature of man and things, Hobbes, like all of the descriptive psychologists who were to follow him, was concerned only with what men *call* good, or take to be good. In his opinion, the good is merely whatever is the object of the appetite of man, and the bad is merely the object of his aversion. Similarly, all pairs of value adjectives, such as fair or foul, beautiful or ugly, honourable or base, are merely indicative of man's appetitive, outstretching or aversional, withdrawing nature. They indicate nothing in the actual constitution of things. In a word, the good is whatever men move towards, or (in the words of modern behaviourists) are adient towards; and the bad is whatever men move away from, or are abient from.

Pleasures or pains, when arising from an object of sense that is present, are called pleasures or pains of sense; others, arising from objects of sense no longer present, or anticipated in the future, are called pleasures or pains of the mind. Strictly speaking, they are all sensual affections and motions, and consequently Hobbes' hedonism is quantitative. All deliberation is simply the alternations of these appetites and aversions, and when the last link in a chain of them is an appetite, it passes over into grasping action and is called will. When the last link in the chain is an aversion, it involves withdrawal and is called unwillingness. All thoughts are small appetites or aversions, and are like the scouts or spies of an army, sent out ahead to bring back a report before the advance or retreat of the main force. The good is the pleasant merely as an accompaniment of appetite which causes an organism to seek more of a given stimulus; the bad is the painful merely as an accompaniment of aversion which causes an organism to seek less of a stimulus.⁹

⁹ Quantitative, egoistic, yet descriptive hedonism.

HEDONISM AS THE BASIS OF GROUP WELFARE: JEREMY BENTHAM

Just as the views of Hobbes were to some extent the result of the successful application of mechanical principles to nature in the rising natural science, so the views of Bentham were partly the result of the application of science to modern inventions and the effect of these upon the lives of men. Prior to the industrial revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, the defenders of social virtues had in mind a limited group of friends or specially privileged citizens towards whom altruistic efforts were directed. The Greek views of ethics were designed almost entirely for the unusual individual, whether emperor or slave. Both Plato and Aristotle dismissed the masses of unenlightened citizens as incapable of ethical living, and assumed unique intellectual and economic advantages to be available for every ethical man. Shaftesbury at the beginning of the eighteenth century developed a theory of natural, social affections, but he considered these feelings to be directed chiefly towards a relatively narrow circle of friends and fellow citizens in a small community. Late in the eighteenth century came three important inventions: The spinning frame, by Richard Arkwright (1732-1792), the power loom, by Edmund Cartwright (1743-1823), and the condensing steam engine, by James Watt (1736-1819). Some of the effects of these machines upon the economic life of England were the collapse of the small independent trader and craftsmen, the segregation of people in the cities either to work in new factories or to walk the streets looking for work, increased means of communication, more travel and trade, an expansion of world markets, and in general the rise of the laissez-faire theory of economic life, as described by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*. Some of the tragic results of these changes in the lives of men were admirably described by Oliver Goldsmith in *The Deserted Village*, in which he sketches the deterioration of a small town

with the shift of the economic centre of gravity to the industrial cities. The times were ripe for a prophet of group welfare, and he was forthcoming.

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) was born in Red Lion Street, Houndsditch, London. His childhood was spent near Reading, and his schooling was at Westminster and Oxford. In entering upon the study of law, he was impressed from the very beginning with the existence of legal abuses, and disliked Blackstone because of the latter's antipathy to reform. He was amazed that a system under which there were so many injustices could be defended by the conservatives as the perfection of human reason. Consequently one of his leading interests, from the time when he gave up the idea of a political career, was prison and legal reform. Accompanying this interest was an apparently incompatible belief in the extreme individualistic laissez-faire principles of Adam Smith, and his hedonism was an attempt to adjust an individualistic theory of pleasure to the needs of wider groups of citizens. His most important work was the *Introduction to Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789). James Mill and his son, John Stuart Mill, were Bentham's famous colleagues and successors.

Bentham's hedonism is based upon the conception of utility.

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. . . . By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of any action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever; and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government. By utility is meant that property of any object whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness (all this in the present case comes to the same thing), to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in gen-

eral, then the happiness of the community: if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual.¹⁰

Like other hedonists, Bentham contends that individuals seek pleasure and try to avoid pain. Unlike Hobbes and other descriptive psychologists, Bentham mentions this fact in order to use it as the basis for ethical evaluation. Since people seek pleasure, pleasure is the good, and the theory of utility rests upon this assumption. Utilitarianism is a theory of value and not merely a description of human behaviour.

Now, we have found among the ancients two different types of ethical hedonism. Aristippus believed that all pleasures are alike in kind, while Epicurus distinguished between two different kinds. On this point, Bentham is in agreement with Aristippus. While each individual is the sole judge of his own pleasures and pains, all pleasures and pains are qualitatively alike. Like longer and shorter bars of copper, they are of one sort, though some are greater and some smaller. While the famous Greek sensualist used this theory to suggest to a self-centred person that his greatest good lay in bodily pleasures, Bentham was interested in the problem of discovering the greatest amount of pleasure for the greatest number of persons in a community. Pleasures are not only qualitatively alike in the experience of one person, but, similarly, the pleasures of all persons in a society are of the same kind. Consequently the prudent legislator is able to have as his goal what Beccaria called "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," pleasure and happiness being considered to be identical.

Therefore, unlike the essentially egoistic hedonism of Aristippus, Epicurus, and Hobbes, Bentham's utilitarianism means that the good is the maximum of pleasure for the largest number of people. While each man must remain the judge of what is pleasant for him, there is a commensurability in all of his pleasures, and between his and those of his fellow citizens in

¹⁰ Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chap. I.

such a way that computation of the pleasures of groups is possible. Selfish hedonism is abandoned in favour of a consideration of the pleasures of others, without any assumption of different kinds of pleasure. The result is Bentham's famous calculus of pleasures and pains for the use of the legislator:

To a person considered *by himself*, the value of a pleasure or pain considered *by itself*, will be greater or less, according to the four following circumstances: (1) Its *intensity*; (2) its *duration*; (3) its *certainty* or *uncertainty*; (4) its *propinquity* or *remoteness*.¹¹

When such pleasure or pain is related to the act which produces it two other considerations enter:

(5) Its *fecundity*, or the chance it has of being followed by sensations of the *same* kind: that is, pleasures, if it be a pleasure: pains, if it be a pain; (6) its *purity*, or the chance it has of *not* being followed by sensations of the *opposite* kind: that is, pains, if it be a pleasure: pleasures, if it be a pain.¹²

Finally, in relation to a group of persons, the above six considerations enter, plus another:

(7) Its *extent*; that is, the number of persons to whom it *extends*; or (in other words) who are affected by it.¹³

Bentham develops the ways in which these various factors may be calculated and balanced against one another, and holds that the same type of computation would apply to any pairs of value adjectives because they are in the long run identical with pleasure and pain. His stress throughout is upon the pleasures and pains of the group, as considered by the legislator. The good is the greatest amount of the one sole kind of pleasure extending to the greatest number of people.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, Chap. III.

¹² *Loc. cit.*

¹³ *Loc. cit.*

THE GOOD AS THE FINER PLEASURES FOR MANY PEOPLE:

J. S. MILL

The last kind of hedonism which we shall consider is the principle of the greatest pleasure for the greatest number, and, superimposed upon it, the distinction between qualitatively higher pleasures and the lower sensual ones.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was born in London. His childhood is a famous example of extreme precocity, aided and abetted by his father, who taught him Greek at three and enabled him to read widely in the classics and history at eight. For many years, Mill served in important positions in the India House, and in 1865 he entered Parliament for a brief period. Meanwhile, he was an extremely prolific writer, contributing to Bentham's *Westminster Review*, defending woman suffrage, and writing such important works as *Logic* (1828), *Political Economy* (1848), *Liberty*, *Utilitarianism*, and *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*.

To the extent that all goods in human life are reducible to pleasures and all pleasures are of one single kind, Bentham's calculus of pleasures becomes a useful tool in the hands of a humanitarian legislator. Utilitarianism rests upon these two premises. While the truth of both assumptions may be doubted, the strength of Bentham's position lies in his hedonistic theory of the good, and its interpretation along quantitative lines exclusively. On the other hand, if there are different kinds of pleasures of quite incommensurable value, the calculus breaks down. If the legislator is forced to choose between the greater amount of bodily pleasure for a large number of citizens, and a greater amount of the pleasures of intellect for a few cultivated sages, there is no standard according to which these two goods can be compared. The Benthamite legislator can effectively measure the greatest good of the greatest number only by blotting out the distinction, so dear to the Epicurean, between *kinds* of pleasure. Therefore, in spite of Bentham's hu-

manitarian motive, his utilitarianism was attacked by believers in the superior value of pleasures of intellect over those which are sought by the average citizen.

J. S. Mill found himself caught between these two conflicting motives. He wished to retain the humanitarian aspect of utilitarianism, but to supplement that view with a distinction between higher and lower kinds of pleasure. He was trying to eat his cake and still have it. He wished to protect utilitarianism against the charge that it destroyed the distinction, always important for the sage, between the pleasures of soul and those of body; yet he wished to retain, as far as possible, the ideal of pleasures for everyone. The result is a curious mixture of the ideas of Epicurus and Bentham. With the latter, he held that the pleasures of most people are important, realizing that, to some extent, whatever pleasure they recognize and seek must be judged valuable. With Epicurus he went part way, admitting that some pleasures are higher or finer than others. He could not, however, follow the Garden sage to the extent of maintaining that mental pleasures are the sole goods, and that the ideal life is one of tranquillity. This ideal is for the exceptional individual, and Mill wanted to include all persons, while reserving the higher pleasures for those people capable of experiencing them. Hence he considered that the good is pleasure, chiefly, yet not solely, intellectual. Even sensual pleasures are good for those who know none better; and the interest of the legislator in these ignorant pleasure seekers must be unabated, although supplemented by his attention to the development of the pleasures of the exceptional persons who recognize the higher types.

Mill's view, therefore, faces both ways. Against any form of selfish hedonism he brings in the utilitarian conception of the greatest good for the greatest number, and so is forced to include in his indictment the Epicureans with their solely self-centred search for the finer pleasures. But against any attempt merely to consider the quantitatively greater pleasures of the

greatest number of (perhaps stupid) citizens, he turns to Epicurus for support, holding that

It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize the fact that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone. . . .

It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.¹⁴

While agreeing with this view, the Epicurean could very readily hold that the name "utilitarianism," the *greatest* pleasure of the *greatest* number, can hardly be said any longer to apply. While Bentham would also object that the test of a person's pleasure is his own taste, and to the extent that the lower, sensual pleasures are quantitatively greater for most human beings, then these are the ones which the legislator should have as his goal and not the finer ones advocated by the Epicurean sages, as joined by Mill in their Garden. Mill's hybrid view, whatever are its contradictions, means the greatest pleasure for the greatest number, chiefly of a finer, intellectual sort.¹⁵

THE LIMITATIONS OF HEDONISM

We have now completed a brief sketch of several theories of hedonism. Each of them will appeal to some people. Lovers of food and drink will find something of truth in the views of Aristippus, possibly admitting that he went too far. The lovers of a quiet evening with a book before a fire will agree with Epicurus and Mill up to a point. Social workers and other group meliorists will find Bentham's main ideas correct, however unsatisfactory his calculus of pleasures is in detail. Students

¹⁴ J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chap. II.

¹⁵ Qualitative utilitarianism.

of modern psychology may find something to agree with in Hobbes. Some people will possibly find all hedonism entirely false, if not dangerous. Wise conduct would not seem to be the outcome of any one of these theories alone, and yet none of them is entirely foolish in special situations. At some times and under special conditions sensual pleasure has its place. At other times for some people the pleasures of intellect are wise and expedient. For many people an interest in the pleasures of large groups of persons is highly desirable. There is no accident in the fact that most students of ethics have spent much time and zeal defending or refuting hedonism of one sort or another. Pleasures of various amounts and kinds are among the goals which the student who aims at wise conduct must take into account.

In spite of these facts, hedonism is, for several reasons, an inadequate view of ethics. (1) Like advocates of other conceptions of the good, the defenders of pleasure ignore every feature of living except the ends or aims of conduct. By misplaced emphasis, they neglect all considerations of human character, the complexity of types of conduct, and the effects of conduct upon other individuals and groups. By further limitation, they contend that no end save pleasure is valuable for its own sake. All other goods are entirely reduced to pleasure. In fact, there are many objects, passions, acts, ends, and goals which are valuable in their own right, quite apart from any relation to pleasure. Play, education, marriage, friendship, a career, government, etc., involve values or goods which are quite incommensurate with pleasure. Even attempts to eliminate poverty, crime, and sickness, while not activities which are carried on for their own sakes, can hardly be aptly described as praiseworthy merely as preludes to pleasure. (2) Ethical thinkers, from Plato to Mr. G. E. Moore,¹⁶ have demonstrated various fallacies in hedonism. It is sufficient to note that each particular type of hedonism in some measure refutes the others. If my

¹⁶ G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge, 1903, pp. 59-74.

own pleasure is the sole good, then the pleasure of others is not in itself a part of the good. If some pleasures are finer than others, then a merely quantitative maximum of pleasure is not the highest good. If the good is merely what men happen to seek, then the good is not necessarily a genuine feature of things deserving to be sought; while if there is a real good which is pleasure, this good is not necessarily what individuals happen to be pursuing.

PLEASURE AS EVIL: CYNICISM

All the opponents of hedonism agree that the good is not solely pleasure, but some of them defend an equally restricted conception of ethics centring all goodness in one specific pattern or type. The ancient Cynics and Stoics, as well as Plato in the *Gorgias*, exclude all pleasure from the good, attacking even a partial identification of the good and the pleasant; while Plato in a later dialogue, the *Philebus*, readmits pleasure as a subordinate but necessary ingredient in the good life. Let us deal successively with these anti-hedonistic theories of the good.

The most uncompromising opponents of pleasure were the Cynics, Antisthenes and Diogenes. Antisthenes (c. 444-365 B.C.) was born in Athens and was the possibly illegitimate son of an Athenian and a Thracian. At an early age he came under the influence of Socrates and walked forty furlongs every day to listen to his discussions in the market place. Later Antisthenes founded his own school, attracting the poorer classes because of the extreme simplicity of his manner of living. He died of consumption. His most famous follower, Diogenes (c. 412-323 B.C.), was born at Sinope. After joining Antisthenes' band in Athens, he soon gained wide notoriety because of his quick wit, his strange mannerisms, and his primitive mode of living. He lived in a tub or barrel, and always ate from a simple bowl in the Athenian market place. He practised begging, and spent much of his time rubbing his stomach and regretting that any food at all was necessary. He was taken prisoner and offered

for sale, and upon being asked what his profession was, he replied, "Governing men." After being purchased by Xeniadēs, he was apparently an excellent teacher of the children of his master. One of Diogenes' sayings was "that most men were within a finger's breadth of being mad. If, then, anyone were to walk along, stretching out his middle finger, he will seem to be mad; but if he puts out his forefinger, he will not be thought so."¹⁷ Some said that Diogenes died from holding his breath, while others held that he died from swallowing a cow's hoof.

Ancient cynicism must be distinguished from a bitter cynical attitude in the modern sense of the word. The modern cynic is apt to be a person who has become jaded through a life of pleasure. Having burned his candle at both ends, he becomes bitter towards everything. He sneers at worldly goods and pleasures, only to seek them avidly in practice. As Goethe put it, he is cynical about pleasures not because he really dislikes them, but because over-indulgence makes him long for them in vain.

Such cynicism was unknown to the ancient Cynics. Antisthenes and Diogenes were contemptuous towards all human strivings and pleasures and rejected both in practice. The Cynics undertook no activities in education, business, trade, or government. They disparaged friendship and family life. Antisthenes held that a wise man will marry, but merely in order to have children. His love for his wife will be accompanied by a scorn for marital pleasure. Diogenes, on the other hand, advocated a community of wives and children, marriage being, in his opinion, a nullity. In general, the Cynics believed that men should train their minds and bodies in useful toil, not because the fruits of their labour are of any consequence, but because a life of hardened self-sufficiency is the highest good. Music, geometry, and astronomy are useless and unnecessary. The most important precept is: All pleasure is to be shunned. Antisthenes said:

¹⁷ Diogenes Laërtius, *op. cit.*, Book VI, p. 229.

"I had rather go mad than feel pleasure"; and Diogenes used to practise disappointments. Folly and sensuality are the causes of unhappiness. Introducing an opinion held later by J. S. Mill, Diogenes held that "the very contempt of pleasure, if we only inure ourselves to it, is very pleasant." Pleasure in the avoidance of pleasure is, paradoxically, the only element of pleasure in the Cynic's good life. In contrast to the opinion of Aristippus, Diogenes once said to a man who used perfume: "Have a care, lest the fragrance of your head give a bad odour to your life." In theory and in practice, pleasure is considered by the Cynics as an unmitigated evil.

PLEASURE AS EVIL: STOICISM

In another connection, we considered Stoicism as a theory of ethics embodying the search for right rules of conduct. In addition, the Stoics formulated a conception of the good somewhat along the lines of Cynicism. While, according to both schools, pleasure must be dismissed as extrinsic to the good, the Stoics, particularly those of later times, modified the antisocial conclusions which the Cynics had drawn from this teaching.

The Stoics attacked the very cornerstone of hedonism by denying that persons naturally seek pleasure.

They say that the first inclination which an animal has is to protect itself, as nature brings herself to take an interest in it from the beginning. . . . But as for what some people say, that the first inclination of animals is to pleasure, they say what is false. For they say that pleasure, if there be any such thing at all, is an accessory only, which nature, having sought it out by itself, as well as those things which are adapted to its constitution, receives incidentally in the same manner as animals are pleased, and plants made to flourish.¹⁸

In a vein echoed in modern times by Joseph Butler and T. H. Green, the Stoics contended that self-preservation and self-

¹⁸ Diogenes Laërtius, *op. cit.*, Book VII, p. 290.

development rather than pleasure are the ends which men and animals naturally pursue. To the extent that pleasure is involved at all, it remains an incidental, secondary consideration; or, as Green says, pleasure is the outcome of attaining an *object* sought. Pleasure is neither genuinely valuable or even chiefly valued.

The good, then, according to the Stoics consists in following the motive of self-development to its logical conclusion. Men are living in a rational universe, pervaded by eternal, natural (if not divine) laws. Right conduct is living according to reason; the good life is the resultant harmony with the universal, rational nature. Perfect happiness is harmonious living according to divine Providence. The pattern of the good life includes rational emotions but excludes every irrational feeling, including pleasure.

Pleasure is an irrational elation of the mind over something which appears to be desirable. . . . [But just] as there are said to be some sicknesses in the body, as, for instance, gout and arthritic disorders; so, too, are those diseases of the soul, such as a fondness for glory, or for pleasure, and other feelings of that sort.¹⁹

The search for pleasure is a kind of mental arthritis. On the other hand, "there are . . . three good dispositions of the mind; joy, caution, and will. And joy . . . is the opposite of pleasure, since it is a rational elation of the mind. . . ." ²⁰ "Indeed," says Marcus Aurelius, "he who pursues pleasure as good, and avoids pain as evil, is guilty of impiety." ²¹

The Stoics' strict banishment of irrational emotions from the good life must not be confused with the Cynics' abandonment of all active achievement in social, political, and personal living. Zeno at times went to gay parties, although he remained inwardly aloof. The Stoics drank wine, but they were never drunk or in a frenzy. While they refrained from business, they be-

¹⁹ Diogenes Laërtius, *op. cit.*, Book VII, p. 301.

²⁰ *Loc. cit.*

²¹ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, IX, 1.

lieved that the wise man would take part in political life if nothing hindered him. They advocated marriage and the begetting of children, and held that parental affection is natural and does not exist in bad men. "The wise man will not live in solitude, for he is by nature sociable and practical." They advocated friendship and a proper reverence for the gods. They admitted that unlike their own inward calmness, some types of freedom from emotion proceed in a bad man "only from the hardness and unimpressibility of his nature." In general, they coupled inward austerity and a scorn for pleasure with an outward life of active, practical, social well-being. Their pattern of the good life is indeed more rigid than the modes of conduct which they favoured in practice. Like defenders of many another one-sided ethical theory, they broadened their official tenets to include more than strict logic would allow. For example, feelings of family affection do not combine very readily with an attitude of complete inward aloofness. Furthermore, while it may be doubted that joy is purely a rational elation, the Stoic's distinction between the feelings of joy and pleasure is well taken. In general, to the extent that the Stoics became less concerned with a rigid pattern of austere goodness and turned their attention more to the arena of conduct, their views provide important clues to the problems of well-being and well-doing. ". . . Wisdom in counsel they think [is] a knowledge which leads us to judge what we are to do, and how we are to do it, in order to act becomingly."²² Perhaps, after all, wisdom in counsel, carrying over into practice, is ethical living. Or, as Marcus Aurelius says:

And remember that the term "rational" was intended to signify a discriminating attention to every several thing and freedom from negligence. . . . Not in passivity, but in activity lie the evil and the good of the rational social animal, just as his virtue and his vice lie not in passivity, but in activity.²³

²² Diogenes Laërtius, *op. cit.*, Book VII, p. 293.

²³ Marcus Aurelius, *op. cit.*, X, 8; IX, 16.

PLATO'S REJECTION OF PLEASURE

Diogenes considered Plato to be a vain babbler, yet it was Plato who formulated a rational defence of the view that the good and the pleasant are mutually exclusive. In the *Gorgias* the Platonic Socrates distinguished between such opposites as health and disease, strength and weakness, speed and slowness. A man, he gets Callicles to admit, is either absolutely sick or absolutely well, absolutely strong or absolutely weak, absolutely fast or absolutely slow.

And so too with good things and happiness and their opposites—bad things and wretchedness—does one take on each of these in turn, and in turn put it off? ²⁴

As in the cases of illness and health, speed and slowness, strength and weakness, the difference between good and evil is absolute. A man is either absolutely good at one time or absolutely bad.

Having established these distinctions, Plato considers whether or not they hold with reference to pleasure and pain.

S. Did you say that being hungry was pleasant or painful? I mean, hunger itself.

C. Painful, I said; though eating when one is hungry I call pleasant.

S. I see: but at all events hunger itself is painful is it not?

C. I agree.

S. And so too with thirst?

C. Quite so. . . .

S. Very good: but drinking when one is thirsty you surely say is pleasant?

C. I do.

S. Now, in this phrase of yours the words "when one is thirsty," I take it, stand for "when one is in pain"?

C. Yes.

²⁴ Plato, *Gorgias*, Lamb's translation, The Loeb Classical Library, Vol. V, Heinemann, Harvard, 1932, §496.

S. But drinking is a satisfaction of the want, and a pleasure?

C. Yes.

S. So in the act of drinking, you say, one has enjoyment?

C. Quite so.

S. When one is thirsty?

C. I agree.

S. That is, in pain?

C. Yes.

S. Then . . . you say one enjoys oneself, though in pain at the same moment, when you say one drinks when one is thirsty.²⁵

A person may experience pleasure and pain at the same time. Since, however, the distinction between good and bad has been shown to be so absolute that they cannot occur together, the good and the bad cannot be even partly identical with the pleasant and the painful. The good cannot be the pleasant.

Let us examine this argument. Are illness, strength, and speed always sharply distinguishable from their opposites? A man with a slight cold is not so ill as a man with a severe cold, yet he is not quite well. In comparison with an ill man, he is well enough to be at the office, while in comparison with the well man he is working less intensively. He is ill and well at the same time. A wrestler thrown by a champion is weak; wrestling with an amateur, he is strong. A runner outstripped by the champion is slow, but in the same race at the same time he outstrips other runners, and is fast. Furthermore, a man ill with a cold is at the same time well from the pox, while a man with the pox has no throat trouble. A strong wrestler may be a weak boxer; a strong boxer may be a weak wrestler. A fast runner may be a slow fencer; a quick fencer may be a slow runner. A man may be both ill and well, strong and weak, slow and fast, in differing degrees, and in different fashions, in some cases at the same time. The same situation obtains in the case of other positive and negative values in human con-

²⁵ *Ibid.*

duct. Far from proving that no goods are pleasures, the simultaneity of pleasure and pain means that, in at least one case, what is good may indeed be mixed with what is bad, what we are seeking being mixed with what we are escaping from. Nor is Plato entirely satisfied with his analysis, for he asks Callicles to follow him in further reasoning which would have been superfluous if the former argument had been entirely valid.

Plato's further arguments suggest considerations which indeed render the doctrine of hedonism untenable. In the first place, a silly child experiences perhaps a great deal of pleasure. A fool may be pleased, while a wise man may be unhappy. A coward and a brave man are equally pleased at the retreat of the enemy. Such considerations are quite pertinent. Modern investigation shows that in certain phases of manic-depressive insanity the patient experiences quantitatively much more pleasure than normal people. Whatever the good life may be, it includes more than pleasure. The man who spent his full span of years being perpetually pleased at mealtime would hardly for this reason be leading the good life.

THE GOOD AS A MIXED LIFE OF PLEASURE AND INTELLECT

In a later dialogue, the *Philebus*, Plato delivered the final stroke to hedonism, and, at the same time, abandoned his strict rejection of all pleasure from the good. He distinguished between pleasure and the consciousness of it.

S. Would you choose, Protarchus, to live all your life long in the enjoyment of the greatest pleasures?

P. Certainly I should.

S. Would you consider that there was still anything wanting to you if you had perfect pleasure?

P. Certainly not.

S. Reflect; would you not want wisdom and intelligence and forethought, and similar qualities? Would you not at any rate want sight?

P. Why should I? Having pleasure I should have all things.

S. Living thus, you would always throughout your life enjoy the greatest pleasures?

P. I should.

S. But if you had neither mind, nor memory, nor knowledge, nor true opinion, you would in the first place be utterly ignorant of whether you were pleased or not, because you would be entirely devoid of intelligence.

P. Certainly.

S. And similarly, if you had no memory you would not recollect that you had ever been pleased, nor would the slightest recollection of the pleasure which you feel at any moment remain with you; and if you had no true opinion you would not think that you were pleased when you were; and if you had no power of calculation you would not be able to calculate on future pleasure, and your life would be the life, not of a man, but of an oyster, or of some other of those living creatures, whose home is the seas and whose souls are concealed in shelly bodies. Is all this so, or can we think otherwise than this?

P. No.

S. But is such a life desirable?

P. Socrates, your reasoning has left me utterly dumb.²⁶

No one would want to experience pleasure without knowing that he was experiencing it, remembering it, and anticipating it. No human being would want to purchase the presumed contentment of a cow at the cost of all insight and self-knowledge. Pleasure alone is not the good.

Plato concludes that the good life is, therefore, a mixture of intellect or knowledge, and pleasure. Pure pleasures, with no admixture of pain, must be distinguished from mixed pleasures in which pain also is present. Of the mixed pleasures, some are bodily only—for instance, scratching; some are of body and mind—for example, the pain of hunger accompanied by the pleasure of hoping for food; and some of mind alone, notably fear, anger, desire, and sorrow. Pure or true pleasures are

²⁶ Plato, *Philebus*, Jowett's translation, Clarendon, 1892, §21; last few lines from G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge, pp. 88-89. By permission.

bestowed by beauty of colour and form, and may involve sound, sight, smell, or knowledge. Into the good life Plato proposes to admit only these pure pleasures. Similarly, knowledge is pure or impure, the former kind involving measuring, arithmetic, science, and exact art, while the latter kind includes music, medicine, and the applied arts. Into the highest life pure knowledge is admitted because of its exactitude and the abiding nature of its objects; yet impure forms of knowledge must also be admitted because they are essential to human life. On the other hand, the impure pleasures are to be excluded because "they are the source of ten thousand hindrances to us; they trouble the souls of man . . . with their madness." The highest good includes any kind of knowledge pure and impure, and all pure pleasures. Any pleasures linked with most bodily processes or accompanied by pain are excluded by Plato.

LIMITATIONS IN THE REJECTION OF PLEASURE

The theories of the good of the Cynics, the Stoics, and Plato involve the same general limitations as hedonistic views. Like all theories of the good, they ignore every feature of living except the ends or aims of conduct. The Stoics exempt themselves to some extent from this charge, but they do so only by relaxing their more rigorous conception of the self-sufficient sage. Each of these anti-hedonistic theories banish all sensual pleasure, if not all pleasure whatsoever, from their respective patterns of the good life. It would seem that even sensual pleasures are among the goals which human beings may, in certain circumstances, seek wisely. The precise rôles which various sorts of pleasures should play in a person's life are determinable only in and through a discriminating attention to the problems of character and conduct, with which pleasure is linked, as well as by a careful evaluation of a multiplicity of goals, aims, or ends, other than pleasure. Like the hedonists, those opponents of pleasure who erect counter-hedonistic theories of the good ignore these wider phases of human living

and seek to impose upon human beings a single rigid pattern of goodness. While wise considerations are sometimes woven into this framework, it is, in the main, too restricted to take adequate account of many features of ethical life.

THE GOOD AS POWER: PLATO'S CALLICLES

"War is the king of all; without strife all things would pass away." With these words, Heraclitus of Ephesus, one of the earlier Greek philosophers, set the stage for the development of the theory that the good is power. Two dramatic variations of this theme are found in the views of Plato's Callicles in the *Gorgias*, and Plato's Thrasymachus in the *Republic*. Its main defender in modern times is Nietzsche.

Callicles begins his exposition of the view that the good is power, in a way which almost exactly anticipates Nietzsche.

. . . The makers of laws are the majority who are weak; and they make laws and distribute praises and censures with a view to themselves and to their own interests; and they terrify the stronger sort of men, and those who are able to get the better of them . . . ; and they say that dishonesty is shameful and unjust; meaning by the word "injustice" the desire of a man to have more than his neighbours; for knowing their own inferiority, I suspect that they are too glad of equality. And therefore the endeavour to have more than the many is conventionally said to be shameful and unjust, and is called injustice, whereas nature herself intimates that it is just for the better to have more than the worse, the more powerful than the weaker; and in many ways she shows, among men as well as among animals, and indeed among whole cities and races, that justice consists in the superior ruling over and having more than the inferior.²⁷

The just (or good) life for individuals and groups is one of powerful, active self-expression at the expense of other individuals or groups. Such justice is a law of nature. There is a struggle for power among persons and groups, each seeking his own self-aggrandizement; and the triumph of the superior is

²⁷ Plato, *Gorgias*, Jowett's translation, Clarendon, 1892, §483. By permission of the Jowett trustees.

right. Might triumphs, and it is right that it should. Since the majority of individuals, however, are relatively weak, they band together and formulate a theory of goodness or justice which is the opposite of this natural theory that the good is power. They invert the terms "just" and "unjust." In this conventional or artificial view, it becomes unjust for the strong to triumph over the weak, and just for every man to be equal.

We take the best and strongest from their youth upwards, and tame them like young lions,—charming them with the sound of the voice, and saying to them, that with equality they must be content, and that the equal is the honourable and the just. But if there were a man who had sufficient force, he would shake off and break through and escape from all this; he would trample under foot all our formulas and spells and charms and all our laws which are against nature: the slave would rise in rebellion and be lord over us, and the light of natural justice would shine forth. . . . Law "makes might to be right, doing violence with highest hand."²⁸

In the guise of natural power casting off the chains of conventional morality, the good shines forth in all of its natural glory. The superman, bursting from his stall, is strutting and stamping in the Garden two thousand years before Nietzsche.

As in the case of some of the hedonistic views, there are involved here two different ideas, a description and an evaluation. (1) The more powerful man *will* triumph over others because of his power, and justice and goodness consist in the fact of this triumph. According to this view, whatever person or group happens to triumph is, for that reason, good. (2) Certain special individuals have the *right* to triumph because they are stronger, while the majority of people, *whatever their combined strength may be*, have no right to triumph because of their individual weaknesses and inferiority.

The Platonic Socrates has no difficulty in showing Callicles that these views are in deep contradiction. If the first is correct,

²⁸ Plato, *op. cit.*, §§483-84.

then whoever triumphs is good. But the masses of citizens advocating equality may have, by virtue of their numbers, greater power than the few strong men. Therefore, they may triumph, in which case they are, from the point of view of Callicles, good and just, rather than the few strong men whom they keep in subservience. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, too. If goodness lies in the triumph of the superior man when *he* triumphs, it lies in the triumph of the majority of common men when *they* triumph. Some criterion of goodness other than power must be set up, if Callicles wishes to assert that the triumph of the idea of equality is the triumph of a conventional idea rather than a natural law. If might makes right, two slaves who can overthrow a superman and drag him down to their level are together better than he. Callicles is forced, therefore, to abandon a purely descriptive theory that might makes right, and to seek some other criterion for the superiority of his natural man. Certain persons, being wise, have the right to triumph over other people, in spite of the fact that these few wise persons are weaker than ten thousand fools. Power alone is not the good.

THE GOOD AS POWER: PLATO'S THRASYMACHUS

In Plato's *Republic*, Thrasymachus takes up the defence of the view that might makes right. Justice, he says, is the advantage of the stronger. In a just city, the rulers consider their own individual interest and design the "just" laws with this end in view. Socrates points out several difficulties in the theory. In the first place, he asks Thrasymachus to consider the possibility that the rulers may misjudge their own interests. If they make a law which hurts themselves, then justice consists in the disadvantage of the stronger. Thrasymachus holds that on such an occasion they are not really the stronger; only when they actually legislate in their own favour are they stronger. Arguing by analogy, Socrates says that each art and skill has as its end the interest of its object or product, rather than that of

the artist or craftsman. The physician, as a physician, has the interest of the patient at heart, even if, as a money-maker, he is concerned with his own gain. Ship captains have in mind the interest of the sailors. The shepherd seeks the welfare of the sheep. Only when one of these men takes on some rôle other than his strictly professional one does he turn his attention to any other interests, including his own personal advantage. Similarly, government has as its end the welfare of the governed rather than the advantage of the rulers.

These arguments fail to satisfy Thrasymachus, but instead of trying to answer them, he becomes what Nietzsche later calls an immoralist, abandoning the defence of justice and advocating injustice. This shift, as well as its emulation by Nietzsche, does not mean an abandonment of a theory of the good, but merely the defence of another conception, misleadingly called immorality or injustice. Reverting to the view of Callicles, Thrasymachus distinguishes between the goodness or justice of the powerful, selfish, unscrupulous man, and the goodness or justice of the masses of weak men. The latter group call their own virtues justice, and call unjust those of the selfish, powerful man. Thrasymachus adopts the nomenclature of the common man, but he advocates injustice rather than justice. He accepts the labels "immorality" or "injustice" as applied to the superman, but defends his life as good.

. . . Injustice, when great enough, is mightier and freer and more masterly than justice; and . . . justice is to the advantage of the stronger, but injustice is profitable and advantageous to oneself.²⁹

In reply, Socrates forces Thrasymachus to admit that both in cities and individuals, justice causes harmony and agreement, while injustice leads to discord and lack of co-operation. To be capable of effective action, however, an individual or group must co-ordinate its efforts. This will be possible only where there are harmony and co-operation. Therefore, the just man

²⁹ Plato, *Republic*, Lindsay's translation, Everyman's Library, Dutton, 1926, §344.

or city alone will be capable of effective action, while the unjust man or city will be impotent and incapable of all action. Hence, justice is more profitable than injustice, and of greater advantage to a person or state practising it. Since there is no justice among thieves, they are weak and helpless.

While the theory that the good is power does not seem to be true, either in Callicles' rendering as justice or in Thrasy-machus' as injustice, Plato's refutations of these views are not, however, entirely satisfactory. The distinction between a man's act as a physician and as a self-seeking money-lover is in practice not always clear. The patient pays for service rendered, yet he may suffer under the knife of an incompetent yet thoroughly unselfish surgeon. Similarly, laws for the genuine benefit of the citizens may bring personal advantages to the legislator, while the spectacle of unselfish persons ruling foolishly is not unknown. In most activities, from government to shepherding, the motive of genuine benefits to the weak is closely linked with a desire for personal compensation and other power. Plato's distinctions between the end of a profession *per se* and considerations of honour and remuneration are well taken, yet they would hardly seem to dispose of the theory of selfish advantage quite as completely as he asserted. Likewise, the fact that there is no honour among thieves means that all too frequently such men will see their own advantage to lie in a "just" co-operation among themselves in order to obtain thereby a larger amount of spoils for each. By means of "justice" towards each other they are able to increase the effectiveness and scope of their injustice towards the rest of the citizens. The believers in unjust power may stumble upon the idea that the end (their injustice) justifies the means, even a "just" means. An unscrupulous lover of power, whether a superman, criminal, or selfish politician, may realize all too clearly the value of justice in its place within the wider scheme of his own injustice.

NIETZSCHE'S SUPERMAN

The best known defence of the theory of power as the good is that of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). He was born at Roecken, Saxony. At the age of twenty he entered the University of Bonn, and later he went to Leipzig, studying primarily philology. In serving with the artillery in 1867 he received a severe chest injury, and in the Franco-Prussian War three years later his health broke down. For the next eighteen years he fought bravely to overcome his illness, meanwhile publishing many influential books including *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, and preparing the notes for *The Will to Power*. In 1889 he suffered a complete nervous collapse, and he was insane during the last eleven years of his life.

Nietzsche distinguished between two types of morality, master-morality and slave-morality. According to the first, goodness is self-glorification, "the feeling of plenitude, of power, which seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of wealth which would fain give and bestow."³⁰ Master-morality involves within it the conception of bad (*schlecht*), but not of evil (*boese*). The good man must have enemies as well as friends. His enemies are, however, of the same rank as he, and his revenge or retaliation towards them is such as he would expect them in turn to show. His attitude is that of a brave knight; he feels no scorn, no contempt towards his noble enemies. They are necessary as objects for his natural envy, quarrelsomeness, and arrogance: without them he could not be a good friend. Within this circle of noble, aggressive, free men, master-morality holds sway.

Slave-morality is quite different. It is the morality of utility. It begins not with the noble man, but with "the abused, the oppressed, the suffering, the unemancipated, the weary, and those uncertain of themselves." These slaves distrust every-

³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §260.

thing superior and noble, and consequently they consider evil (boese) every value bound up with master-morality. Both the good and the bad (schlecht) of master-morality are evil (boese) in the opinion of slaves. For them the good becomes "those qualities which serve to alleviate the existence of sufferers . . . sympathy, the kind, helping hand, the warm heart, patience, diligence, humility, and friendliness to attain honour."³¹ The good man becomes the safe man, good-natured, easily deceived, and a little stupid. The evil man is strong, subtle, and dangerous, and he arouses fear.

Among the masters, therefore, there is the distinction between good and bad, among the slaves, between good and evil. According to Nietzsche, the genuine moral conflict is not within either of these spheres, but between the two. Master and slave morals, with their accompanying antitheses, are in conflict. This clash represents the natural history of morals. Considered from an objective, impartial standpoint, neither view is absolutely right. Each is right from its own perspective. In Nietzsche's opinion, slave-morality has played, and continues to play, the rôle of a valuable antithesis to that of the strong men. He does not propose to abolish slave-morality, even if he were naïve enough to imagine that he could succeed. Christianity, which he equates with such "lower" morality, is an important base on which the superman can erect his master-morality.

I have declared war against the anaemic Christian ideal . . . not because I want to annihilate it, but only to put an end to its *tyranny* and clear the way for other ideals, for more *robust* ideals. The continuance of the Christian ideal belongs to the most desirable of desiderata; if only for the sake of ideas which wish to take their stand beside it and perhaps above it—they must have opponents, and strong ones, too, in order to grow strong themselves.³²

Out of the conflict between the evil strong men and the good weak ones, Nietzsche hopes to see re-established, within the

³¹ *Loc. cit.*

³² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §361.

circle of the strong, the morality of masters with its own contrasts of good and bad.

We can now understand why Nietzsche, like Thrasymachus, defends immorality or evil rather than goodness. The powerful men in their master-morality ignore the views of the weak. The entire way of life of supermen is beyond good and evil. Yet the presence of these superior men in the world is an unmitigated evil from the point of view of the weak and oppressed. Consequently if the nomenclature of the slave-morality is adopted, the way of life of supermen must be admittedly evil. Nietzsche, like Thrasymachus, is quite willing to adopt the labels which the slaves fasten upon the superman and to use those terms in defending his manner of life. Consequently, the superman is an immoralist, accepting the stigma "evil" and glorying in it. This defence of evil does not mean an attempt to eradicate all of the goods of the common man's morality. ". . . We immoralists require the *power of morality*: our instinct of self-preservation insists upon our opponents maintaining their strength—all it requires is to *become master of them*." ³³ If, from the point of view of the ill and oppressed, the existence of the superior man is dangerous and immoral, well and good; the supremacy of his immorality is Nietzsche's goal. The defenders of utility, mediocrity, and lowliness must be kept in their places.

I value a man according to the quantum of power and fulness of his will. . . . The more healthy, strong, rich, fruitful, and enterprising a man may feel, the more immoral he will be as well. I like man, and often think how I can still further advance him, and make him stronger, more evil, and more profound.³⁴

LIMITATIONS IN THE DEFENCES OF POWER

As in the cases of other theories of the good, the believers in the unique value of power neglect every feature of human

³³ *Op. cit.*, §382, §395.

³⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §295.

living save the ends of conduct, and reduce every end or aim to one pattern or model. Pleasures of various sorts, tranquillity, rationality, self-sufficiency, as well as the more specific ends of private and public living, are all subordinated to the one type of self-assertive, ruthless, fruitful living.

Like hedonism and the views of its opponents, the ethics of power is not entirely lacking in truth. Wise living may indeed involve "healthy, strong, rich, fruitful, and enterprising" activity. In a world in which considerable stress is laid upon the importance of avoiding illness, poverty, crime, and other evils, Nietzsche performs a valuable service in pointing out that other more positive ends are worthy of human endeavour. His views are quite one-sided, however, because he equates all active striving with arrogant strife. The search for a full life of well-being and well-doing requires much striving. But some striving is not strife at all. We strive to climb a mountain, but there is no strife between us and the mountain. We strive to develop ourselves in education, professional activity, art, and science. In these modes of living, however, there is no immediate strife with hostile persons impeding our progress. We strive to bring about improvements in a community by removing poverty, preventing illness, and seeking wise government. There is little direct strife in these activities. Even the procedure of combating crime involves strife with the criminal as an incidental aspect only. While there may be considerable strife between physicians as collectors of fees, much of their striving is towards a common goal, the discovery of means of remedies, and includes a sharing of knowledge with their colleagues. Many types of active, enterprising living may be appraised as eminently wise and desirable without thereby advocating strife at all. Some forms of power may be considered to be highly desirable without thereby valuing mere self-assertive arrogance.

When the exercise of power requires, or apparently requires, strife, the prudence or expediency of the strife does not always survive careful discrimination. There is a Buddhist story of two

kings who were about to make war upon each other, when a neutral showed them that they would both gain by arbitration. The self-expression of both was enhanced by wise negotiation. Even when, upon careful analysis, strife turns out to be wise, it is hardly desirable as a sheer expression of power. Nietzsche's superman glories in the very unconsciousness with which he tramples upon the rights of others. All discrimination, evaluation, and choice are for him forms of cheap, plotting utilitarianism. All planning is degrading. The good life of the superman, therefore, rules out the very faculties of human thinking and evaluating upon which all truly ethical living is founded. However fruitful and self-expressive, any life which cannot be squared with the outcome of careful thought and evaluation lacks every possibility of wisdom.

In addition, only a one-sided account of human nature would relegate all tenderness, fellow feeling, and altruism to the life of a slave. We miss any grasp of personal and family values in the life and thoughts of the superman. No spark of altruism or love of country stirs his feelings. The glorification of power and evil, in which Nietzsche and his Zarathustra find so much profundity, is rather trite in a world in which these ideas have never failed to exercise considerable influence upon men anyway. Iago and Mephistopheles would merely have laughed at Nietzsche's *defence* of immorality. The superman rather exaggerates the stupidity of most people and completely misses the significance of the softer, more humane virtues. When the advocates of humility, tenderness, and altruism transform their way of life into a struggle with the superman, they cease to practise the very virtues which they favour. When the weak and oppressed become hostile towards the superior men, the plotting slave-moralist is merely another superman who has not yet put his more aggressive aims into practice. The love that suffereth long and is kind is not the love that blames the non-sufferer and tries to destroy him. Finally, if the good is power, then, as the Platonic Socrates said, the power of a group

of slaves over a single superman is good. Even the most violent superman can be subdued and put into a straitjacket if there are enough ward attendants.

SUMMARY

We have now completed our examination of three major theories of the good, theories which construe all ethical values in one particular language. Various kinds of hedonism have been considered and found to refute one another. The views of the opponents of pleasure, the Cynics, the Stoics, and Plato, have been found to be relatively narrow. Finally, we have examined the deification of power and strife at the hands of ancient and modern thinkers. Each of these theories tends to restrict ethics to a consideration of its own set of values. All of them must be rejected, not because any of them is entirely wanting in truth, but because they all ignore so many elements in human life. Each of them has but one colour on its palette, and that colour has only one value and intensity. The result is hardly a picture of our human scene.

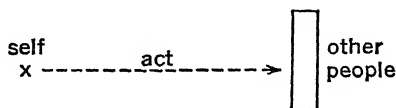
CHAPTER IV

IS THE INNER LIFE THE SOLE LOCUS OF ETHICAL VALUE?

HUMAN CONDUCT AND THE INNER LIFE

WE have now briefly considered two important conceptions of ethics, and have found both to have certain serious limitations. The search for right rules showed a neglect of many important phases of human living and the subjection of human beings to some set of authoritatively given formulae. The search for the good attempted to reduce all of the values in human life to one fixed pattern. Both of these conceptions of ethics ignore the complexity of human nature and the situations in which human beings find themselves forced to think and choose and act.

We turn now to a consideration of human conduct in a wider fashion; namely, as proceeding from an individual with an inward life or character, and directed towards an outer world composed, usually, of other people.



Wise conduct, whatever further qualifications it involves, must take into account the character and inward life of the person (agent), the act or deed, and the objects or persons in the outside world affected by the action. This pattern is far too general to indicate more specific elements of wise living,¹ but for the present it will serve to suggest the framework in which such living occurs. No description of conduct will be adequate if it fails to take into account all three of these elements.

This chapter and the next will deal with two theories of con-

¹ Cf. below, pp. 233, 239-44.

duct which avoid a mistaken emphasis upon right rules or upon the good, but which involve two different distortions of the situations in which human beings find themselves. The first of these theories, noting the important fact that human beings have an inward, spiritual nature, stresses the inward values of spirituality at the expense of all matters of external, political and social well-being. Wise conduct is reduced almost without remainder to the care of the soul. The inner life is made the locus of all ethical values. The second theory, noting the important fact that human beings act frequently in the external arena of political and social life, stresses external, group values at the expense of all inward, personal well-being. Wise conduct is reduced almost without remainder to a consideration of external group welfare. The group becomes the sole locus of ethical value.

Each of these theories is indeed a conception of wisdom in conduct. They are, however, distorted conceptions. Each of them fails to take adequate account of the claims of the other, and both of them fail to realize the wider total situation in which human conduct occurs. In the more specific tenets of their respective advocates, their narrowness is to some degree offset by a recognition of certain opposing values. Thus Tolstoi, while advocating a unique stress upon the values of the inner life, formulates some precepts for group living; and Hegel, emphasizing the values embodied in the nation-state, takes some account of personal and family life. Yet the general tendency in Tolstoi's view is to ignore problems of group living, while Hegel's lip-service to inner values is lost in the broader sweep of his theory of the nation-state. In both cases, the general tendency to distortion will concern us, as samples of a one-sided approach to ethics. In this chapter we shall consider the thesis that the inner life is the sole locus of ethical values.

LAO-TSE, HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

The author of *Tao Teh King*² is said to have been born in 604 B.C. in the province of Honan in middle China. His family name was Li, and in later life he was called Be Yang, meaning "Count Sun." To most of his countrymen he is known as Lao-tse, the old philosopher. He spent the major part of his life as keeper of the imperial archives, and is said to have been visited once, when he was an old man, by the young Confucius. Upon finally leaving his home country, Lao-tse is supposed to have left his writings *Tao Teh King* with a frontier guard as something for his countrymen to remember him by. About a thousand years later he was canonized, and Taoism has developed into an elaborate system of organized religion, presided over by a Taoist pope living in a splendid palace near Lung Hu Shan.

Lao-tse's views include at once a theory of the nature of the universe and a code of human conduct. The former centres about his conception of a divine world-Reason, the *Tao*, the latter about his conception of virtue, *Teh*.

There is a Being wondrous and complete. Before heaven and earth, it was. How calm it is! How spiritual!

Alone it standeth, and it changeth not; around it moveth, and it suffereth not; yet therefore can it be the world's mother. Its name I know not, but its nature I call Reason.³

The world-Reason, or *Tao*, is colourless, soundless, bodiless, and impersonal. From it everything comes, and to it everything eventually returns. The holy man seeks to facilitate his reabsorption in the womb of this transcendental Reason which is the mother of everyone and everything.

² Paul Carus translates *Tao Teh King* as *The Canon of Reason and Virtue*; Diederichs renders it in German as *Sinn und Leben* (Meaning and Life). Carus admits certain mystical elements into the *Tao*, while Diederichs treats it as a kind of theory of knowledge; Carus stresses the personal aspect of the *Teh*, while Diederichs emphasizes the sociological aspect.

³ Lao-tse, *The Canon of Reason and Virtue*, Carus' translation, *Open Court*, 1927, §25, p. 90. By permission of the publishers.

This search, Lao-tse says, cannot proceed directly, for the world-Reason is essentially nameless and unknowable. Its nature passes beyond anything that is comprehensible to human beings, and yet it is their mother, and they call it "home." Because of the trans-human nature of the *Tao*, the holy man is able to point his life towards it only by seeking a secondary, subordinate condition, virtue, which is attainable by human beings. As long as a person continues to wear the mantle of human nature he is able to seek the *Tao* only indirectly through *Teh*, or virtue. Unlike the *Tao*, the *Teh* represents a condition which can actually be reached by human beings or even nations. This condition is simply spiritual, inward fulness. The path which leads to it is that of nonassertion. Practise nonresistance. Requite evil with good, and hatred with virtue; grasp not; live in lowliness and simplicity; banish all desires; do not strive. Spiritual fulness is the result of complete material emptiness and a total absence of desires.

This inward spiritual virtue is, according to Lao-tse, absent in individuals and groups.

Thus one loses Reason [*Tao*] and then virtue [*Teh*] appears. One loses virtue, and then benevolence appears. One loses benevolence, and then justice appears. One loses justice, and then propriety appears. The rules of propriety are the semblance of loyalty and faith and the beginning of disorder.⁴

When true inward virtue is lost, the external pseudo-virtues of benevolence, justice, and propriety arise. All of them are signs of spiritual degeneracy. Family affections—devotion between husband and wife, parents and children—are shallow and unreal. Likewise, prudence and benevolence are merely forms of spiritual wasting away. Propriety of deed and demeanour are masks hiding an inward void. Statecraft, law courts, military establishments, and all the instruments of political well-be-

⁴ *Ibid.*, §38, 5; p. 100.

ing, are merely expressions of the widespread absence of true spirituality among men.

The more restrictions and prohibitions are in the empire, the poorer grow the people. The more weapons the people have, the more troubled is the state. The more there is cunning and skill, the more startling events will happen. The more mandates and laws are enacted, the more there will be thieves and robbers.⁵

Unlike a political or a social reformer, the holy man, according to Lao-tse, does not actively attempt to eliminate the evils in the world. The practice of philanthropy is useless, because it is an evil itself. The search for political justice is itself as corrupt as the conditions it is designed to remedy. Therefore, the holy man shuns the world. He abandons family life and political ties. He avoids law courts and passively resists their decrees. He refuses to participate in military service. Retiring into himself, he returns virtue for hatred, and good for evil. He lives a life of poverty and simplicity, reducing his material wants to a minimum. He feels no devotion, and practises no benevolence, justice, or propriety. By means of complete nonassertion and material emptiness, his character becomes full of true inward virtue.

In spite of the complete preoccupation of the holy man with his own inner life, he does not fail to exercise a remarkable influence upon society. The kind of reform which he is anxious to bring about is not the improvement of external, political, and social conditions, but a spiritual awakening in the lives of others. This reform can never be achieved directly. The holy man does not try to change the character and deeds of persons around him. Yet his mere presence in society heralds the approach of a widespread reform, the appearance of inner virtue and righteousness. The spectacle of a holy man in their midst sweeps the people and the empire towards the kind of virtue which

⁵ Lao-tse, *op. cit.*, §57, 2; pp. 113-14.

knows no petty justice and benevolence, no law courts and armies. The light of the sage's character shines forth and penetrates the lives of others. By tending his own soul, he influences others. He affects them without actively striving ("wirken ohne handeln").

. . . The holy man says: I practise nonassertion, and the people of themselves reform. I love quietude, and the people of themselves become righteous. I use no diplomacy, and the people of themselves become rich. I have no desire, and the people of themselves remain simple.⁶

Like the lilies of the field, Lao-tse's holy man neither toils nor spins, yet his life brings about a profound reform in persons and nations. External justice, propriety, benevolence, and prudence crumble in the face of his virtue-generating anarchy. The holy man's inward peace and humility spreads to society. Hatred becomes requited with virtue. The weak, conquering themselves, subdue the strong. The tender and delicate replace the stiff and hard. Armies, law courts, and policemen disappear; politicians and diplomats become sages. A whole empire achieves virtue, and in this way comes as near the divine *Tao* as human nature allows. Inward spirituality becomes the touchstone of all wise individual and group conduct.

LAO-TSE AND WISE CONDUCT

The views of Lao-tse are a fair sample of the contention that the inner life of spirituality is the sole locus of ethical value. Considered in relation to the divine world-Reason, nothing in human affairs has any significance. All political welfare, justice, and material well-being are trivial. All personal life, marriage, and friendship are unimportant. Even the inward virtue of the holy man represents a "loss" when compared with the serenely trans-human realm of Reason. Therefore, in relation to the

⁶ *Ibid.*, §57, 3; p. 114.

Tao, Lao-tse's conception of ethics involves not only negation *in* conduct, but the negation *of* conduct and everything else connected with mankind. Nothing human is significant *qua* human. This contention presupposes a whole theory of the nature of man and his place in the universe, a theory which is far from obvious and which requires a much more adequate justification than any which Lao-tse offers. The refutation of such a theory requires an elaborate counter-theory which shall not be attempted here. It is sufficient to say that the conception of wisdom in human conduct proceeds upon the assumption that nearly every, if not every, aspect of human living *is* important. Human thoughts and hopes and deeds are meaningful in their own right, whatever additional value they may bear in relation to some superhuman realm of religious values.

Lao-tse's theories of conduct must be appraised, however, not from the perspective of the trans-human *Tao*, but rather in terms of the humanly achievable *Teh*, or inward virtue. Should a person unhesitatingly abandon all other theories of conduct, and follow the way of the holy man? Lao-tse's views would seem to be inadequate both in relation to the individual trying to practise them and as regards their pretended effects upon group living.

In personal life, inner virtue ought to be a main goal of a student who aims at wise conduct. Lao-tse's conception of inner virtue, however, rules out at the very start all family ties—love between husband and wife, parent and child—and all friendship. Precisely what type of inward spirituality would remain in the lives of most persons if such devotion were lacking is difficult to imagine. For anyone but a self-centred sage serenely contemplating his own proximity to the universal Reason, the absence of all love for fellow men, and more specifically for friends and family, is apt to lead simply to an unmitigated indifference to the welfare of human beings. Probably the holy man is not to be judged in this fashion, but this very fact is

evidence of the ineptitude of Lao-tse's advice for most people. For many persons, the injunction to achieve inward virtue by banishing all personal affection means closing the one channel through which such virtue is possible. Pending some complete reorientation of human feelings, affection for others seems to be a necessary basis for human virtue.

In group life, the search of the holy man for inward virtue can hardly be admitted, indubitably, to bring about the precise effects which Lao-tse predicted. Many a sage, coming down into the world, has been convinced that his own special spiritual programme provides a clue to any and every issue of political and social well-being. Perhaps some benevolence among human beings indicates the absence of deeper feelings. Perhaps much justice is the outcome of delicately balanced considerations of mutual expediency. Probably large systems of legal prohibitions and restrictions often operate quite tyrannically to control the lives and habits of harassed citizens. Yet benevolence, justice, and systems of law are the only ways mankind has yet devised to cope with many of the problems of the relations of man to man in this human world. Since so much benevolence is called forth by human needs which ought, ideally speaking, never to have appeared, the task of human government must frequently be to get at the root of human misery. When human legal systems are themselves at fault, steps must be taken to remedy the situation. No anarchist has yet demonstrated, however, that the abandonment of all legal codes and governmental decrees is the wise or effective method of freeing citizens from poverty.

Similarly, criminal justice is admittedly at times a travesty upon everything that is fine and spiritual in human nature. Reformers never tire of telling us that the laws and mandates are at fault. Neither Lao-tse nor other social anarchists have been able to make clear, however, precisely how erring humanity is to deal with criminals pending the appearance of the holy man who sweeps whole nations to a condition of inward virtue. Indi-

vidual cases of nonresistance to the evil-doer may bring untold reward to the person practising a code of nonresistance, nevertheless there is a noticeable absence of criminals whose lives have been reformed because their misdeeds have been met in this manner.

Similarly, Lao-tse's advocacy of the elimination of armies and weapons has never borne the fruits which he predicted. While the possession of weapons by persons or governments varies at times in direct proportion to the trouble which those persons or states experience, not many individuals or states have felt the impact of Lao-tse's virtue-generating social programme sufficiently strongly to be the first to lay down their arms. A child without a gun is not tempted to fire one. A nation without arms is not constrained to use them, even in self-defence. Yet in notably few cases have weak persons or states, by the method of non-resistance, been able to conquer stronger opponents. The lack of all weapons is no guarantee of wise conduct by an individual or group, while the possession of weapons is in itself no criterion of their wise or foolish use.

In general, it may be doubted that the nonassertion of the holy man will lead wide groups of people to reform themselves. If Lao-tse means merely that he advocates, as a part of wise political ruling, a humane attitude, possibly the spectacle of such disinterestedness will produce a similarly unselfish attitude among the people. This attitude will hardly be effective, however, if completely devoid of the very virtues which Lao-tse's wise man scorns and rejects; namely, benevolence, justice, and propriety. There are many problems in political life which an attitude of nonassertion alone will not solve, at least so long as human nature remains constituted as it now is. However desirable the kind of inner integrity in citizens which Lao-tse's holy man might engender, there are in most communities many problems of external well-being which require law courts and government for their solution. However widespread the attitude of spirituality may become in some states, frictions between na-

tions raise the possibility of international conflict and warfare. The search for these inward values must remain tempered in most nations by some cognizance of the need of citizens for economic security, justice, protection from criminals, and some measure of safety against the assaults of other nations. Any theory of conduct which dismisses the problems of external, group welfare as trivial cannot stand up under critical scrutiny, at least until some holy man can change the hearts of men a great deal more than has as yet been possible. The economic and political well-being of a nation is no final gauge of the inward spirituality of its citizens. The uses of adversity are sweet, and many of the more abiding contributions of a nation to civilization have been accompanied by the loss of many of the fruits of economic prosperity and political advantage. If, however, a nation is to live wisely and well, material well-being, with the accompanying virtues of benevolence among its citizens and justice for all, ought not to be dismissed as entirely foolish. Lao-tse is right in holding that these external matters are not everything, but he is wrong in believing that they are nothing at all.

THE VANITY OF LIFE: "ECCLESIASTES"

The book *Ecclesiastes* was probably written about 200 B.C., and possibly by four writers. In the major part of the book the views are expressed as those of a sage, Koheleth. That sage is identified with King Solomon in the first part of the book, but this procedure is soon abandoned. The title, "The Preacher," seems to be out of harmony with the general views of the book, and the teachings will be referred to as those of Koheleth.

Koheleth's views, while involving many ideas similar to Lao-tse's, are more pessimistic in tone. Whereas the great Chinese mystic offered the positive consolation that there is significance in the world-Reason in spite of the triviality in the affairs of men, Koheleth stresses the complete futility of everything under the sun. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of

vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" In nature as well as in all human affairs, action is followed by reaction. The sun comes up, but it also goes down. The wind goes to the north, but then it turns to the south. Things are as they are; there is nothing new under the sun. All human striving is futile; the crooked cannot be made straight.

In a fashion somewhat experimental, Koheleth tested the various values in human living "to see what was good for the sons of men, what they should do under heaven all of the days of their life." He surrounded himself with gardens, orchards, pools of water, servants, maidens, great and small cattle, silver, gold, singers, and musical instruments, and every possible joy. At first, he said, "my heart rejoiced at all my labour." He was not long blinded, however, by this delight.

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.⁷

In the same way that the sun, the winds, and rivers are perpetually changing to no avail, so all men in the end meet with the same fate. The wise man and the fool both come to the same end. "I myself perceived that one event happened to them all." This event could be but one thing, death. If he, Koheleth, no less than the fool, must die, of what value is wisdom, or, as the question might be put, wisdom in conduct? The fool will be forgotten, but so will Koheleth the sage. For these reasons, he said:

I hated life: because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.⁸

As a corollary to what is mainly an inward conviction, Koheleth added a strangely discordant, pragmatic reason. He hated

⁷ *The Bible*, Ecclesiastes, II, 11.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, II, 17.

what his hands had wrought, he said, because he must leave it "unto the man that shall be after [him]." And that man might turn out to be a fool.

Nor is this identity of fate restricted to the wise and the foolish. All other values are lost in the inevitable death that is the lot of everyone.

All *things come* alike to all: *there is* one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as *is* the good, so is the sinner; *and* he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath.⁹

The annihilation of every distinction of value in the lives of men is for Koheleth intolerable. The common fate of good and wicked people indicates a more comprehensive injustice wrapped up in everything in human life. Hence, Koheleth continues:

. . . the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness *is* in their heart while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead. . . . For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished. . . .¹⁰

KOHELETH AND THE INNER LIFE

Are Koheleth's views at all linked with the defence of inward, spiritual values? Do they not represent merely the attitude of another disillusioned lover of material things? Does not his pessimism reduce merely to a deep sense of regret that his gardens, orchards, maidens, and singers must cease to be his when death overtakes him? Is not this borne out by his resentment that someone else will inherit the products of his labour, and only incidentally that the heir may be a fool? There is some truth in these conclusions. Koheleth ceased to value material things, pleasure and the like, because he became aware of the

⁹ *Op. cit.*, IX, 2.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, IX, 3, 5, 6.

futility of them all in the face of inevitable death. Koheleth is upset because *his* striving will cease to bear fruit *for him*; because *he* will be forgotten; because *his* wisdom will eventually count for as little as the life of the fool or of the wicked man. Also he seems to ignore completely the possibility of any realm wherein one's spiritual treasures are free from the attacks of moths and rust and thieves. If, however, we remember that the arguments by means of which he justifies his pessimism are not the grounds from which it springs, but incidental to a conviction that strikes deeper, we can see that his view represents a search for inward, spiritual criteria of deep significance, and his pessimism is based upon a failure to find such values in anything connected with the affairs of men.

This conception of inner values can be best understood in contrast to the views of Plato. The latter defends, in various dialogues, the intrinsic rationality of man, and his relation to an eternal realm of values, the world of forms or Ideas.¹¹ He goes on to present in the *Phaedo* several reasoned defences of the immortality of the soul. In spite of these views, the impression is frequently conveyed that Plato's interest is primarily in the clear conclusions of logic applied both to the soul and to the state. There is a dispassionateness in his dealings with the values bound up with human individuals; their loves, joys, sorrows, hopes, and dreams are subjected throughout to rational, logical tests. He departs from this impersonal point of view chiefly when he becomes intolerant of gain-loving activities or a life of selfish appetite. Koheleth takes quite a different attitude. He does not approach problems of value from the point of view of reason and logic. He gives no proofs of the immortality of the soul; in fact, his conclusions seem to point in the opposite direction. He is nowhere concerned with the values bound up with group living. He makes an entirely self-centred approach to the problems. He builds his own garden; he has his own orchard, his own maidens, his own folly and pleasure. These things he

¹¹ Cf. above, p. 68 n.

investigates with one question in mind: Can I, amidst the welter of labour, striving, pleasure, wine, and song, find a single thing that satisfies my heart (not my reason) as intrinsically and eternally significant? What is the thing, attitude, or way of life, if such there be, that is good for the sons of men in so deep a sense that it ought to occupy them all the days of their life here under the sun? Because Koheleth wants so much, he feels that he finds so little. He finds all matters of conduct to be insignificant, not because they fail to conform to some rational criterion, not because they cannot be tested by a Platonic "proof," but because of their obvious shortcomings in terms of inward spiritual convictions, hopes, fears, and dreams. Koheleth seeks no reasoned plan of social and personal living, but some phase of human life that is free from the futility and impermanence that surround him in nature and humanity. He finds nothing of such unique and unchanging importance; all is, therefore, vanity.

These contrasting attitudes can be most clearly seen in relation to the question of immortality. Plato is serenely confident that sets of reasonings of Pythagorean origin show that the soul will not admit the form or Idea of death. The very alternation of opposites in the world of sense-experience offers clear testimony of the eternity of real things, and among them the soul. The soul is immortal because it is like numbers. As Unamuno has suggested, such reasonings, like those of Spinoza later, fail to satisfy persons who irrationally yearn for an unending continuation of the passionate aspects of their characters. No proofs or logic can satisfy the irrational desire of human beings to continue forever, not as ciphers in a Platonic hierarchy of Ideas, but as inward personalities bound up with family and friends, and involving the feelings of tenderness, hope, fear, and love, and the strivings connected with these. This desire for immortality will never find what it seeks in Plato's proofs, however convincing their logic may be. Death for Koheleth is horrible not so much on logical grounds as because all human values are de-

stroyed by it. Such values are not the serenely eternal Ideas of the good, the beautiful, and the holy, but personal values, springing from the heart—or in a word, from the inner life. What the sage wants is indeed bound up with singers, pools of water, and servants, but he seeks a great deal more than these. He wants to believe that he himself, his inward life, is in some sense exempt from the complete collapse of external values in nature when the wind, the sea, and the sun return to their starting points. He desires a belief that all he undertakes is not vain in some wider scheme of things. His pessimistic conclusion, far from proving that he has no conception of immortality, shows that he knows all too clearly what such eternal life would *mean*, and finds no convincing evidence for it. Koheleth might have centred his desires less in external, selfish power and achievement, and more in love and tenderness and understanding. Perhaps the desire for immortality is less selfish if it concerns the lives of others. But that desire on Koheleth's part springs no less from the heart because it included everything upon which *he* had "expended time and zeal." The same sort of desire, expressed in more spiritual and less selfish terms, is possibly the basis of a Christian approach. In both cases, however, the inward life is uniquely valued. As to the existence of such a realm of value, the Old Testament sage gave only a negative answer. Christ offered a positive one: "If it were not so, I would have told you." In neither case was there an appeal to "proofs." Despite his pessimism, the views of Koheleth may be placed, therefore, alongside the teachings of Lao-tse as embodying the conviction that the inward life is the chief locus of ethical value, and that problems of conduct, both group and personal, are meaningless without reference to such spirituality.

"ECCLESIASTES" AND WISE CONDUCT

In considering the views of Koheleth in relation to wisdom in the conduct of life, two facts must, therefore, be remembered: (1) His search for something of eternal significance; (2)

his pessimism resulting from his failure in that search. In regard to the first fact, certain problems, to be dealt with in the next chapter, must be considered. In civilized life in the twentieth century, so much progress has been made in the development of modern conveniences, man has become to so remarkable an extent master of the material world, that the power of the individual is greater than anything of which Koheleth could have dreamt. Men may still surround themselves with dancers, singers, herds of cattle, gardens, and the like; but in addition they may have motor-cars, aeroplanes, ships, electrical devices of every sort, scientific laboratories, gigantic business and commercial enterprises, etc. Few men find themselves in a position to-day of being able to say: “I have tried and gained everything that can be achieved by man.” The owner of one motor-car may desire and seek two. The owner of one estate may desire a second. The builder of a small business sees larger businesses around him. A small corporation may be developed into a larger one. A large motor-car company may take over such related enterprises as rubber companies, mining, steel production, etc. A modern man finds himself too easily absorbed in material achievement to stop very long to wonder about the importance of it all.

If, however, following Koheleth’s example, modern human beings should lay aside their search for material well-being, and reject as meaningless everything in their lives which failed to measure up to some criterion of supreme spirituality, they would fall into a view of human life as one-sided as is an uncritical acceptance of the importance of all material accomplishments. To fly from the hurly-burly of business activity and political striving, crying *vanity!* is as one-sided as to bow uncritically before the golden calf. When Koheleth says that everything under the sun is vanity because nothing in the affairs of men measures up to a criterion of inward meaning, we respect the values he is seeking, but refuse to agree that there are no other values in human living. While matters of family

life, friendship, education, government, and group welfare may be as temporary as the tides of the sea, they represent some of the most important challenges in human life. While failure and futility in personal and group matters are widespread, success and striving are not contemptible. Life is not meaningless because death is inevitable. Mere living and striving may be foolish, but some living and striving are quite wise. For our reach to exceed our grasp is no evidence that we are reaching for heaven; it may mean precisely the contrary; yet Koheleth's pessimism seems due to the fact that he grasped so many material things so easily. For this reason, he was offended that anything should lie beyond his control. His candid discontent with human affairs is eminently wise, and is much needed today by those who envisage, as the end of wise living, a society with soup-kitchens, medicine, and motor-cars for all. Yet to dismiss completely all striving for external, group goods is as foolish as to become completely absorbed in such matters at the expense of all considerations of character and inward life. The views of Koheleth, like those of Lao-tse, provide an excellent antidote to the equally one-sided exaltation of business prosperity, economic security, social reform, etc., as the be-all and end-all of human living. Neither view gives a complete account of wisdom in the conduct of life.

THE LIFE OF TOLSTOI

A leading modern exponent of the view that a life of inward spirituality is uniquely important is Count Leo Tolstoi (1828-1910). He was born in the country home of his parents in the province of Tula, Russia. His childhood paralleled the last days of serfdom. His education was almost entirely in European (chiefly French) culture. After leaving the university, he abandoned himself to a life of dissipation in Moscow, and he tells us in *A Confession* (as well as in *Resurrection*) that this part of his life was marked by the abandonment of his own ideas and the adoption of the views of his class and friends. In 1851 he enlisted in an artillery corps, and a few years later he took part

in a campaign against the Turks on the Danube and in a later campaign at Sevastopol. These experiences he portrayed in his writings, and they form the basis of his indictments of the cruelty and insensateness of military life. Meanwhile he began to write, and achieved immediate, wide success. After two trips abroad, he became convinced of the shallowness of many of the cultural ideals of western Europe, as well as their complete inapplicability to Russia. Upon his return to his estate, he enthusiastically undertook certain duties, in education and local politics, growing out of the emancipation of the serfs. He soon decided, however, that conditions after the emancipation were not fundamentally different from the evils of earlier times, and began actively to occupy himself with problems of social and political reform. In 1862 he married, and for the next seventeen years his family life was an unusually happy one. Meanwhile, he produced some of his greatest literary masterpieces.

The reader of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* is struck by the breadth of Tolstoi's understanding of various types of human character (as seen in Prince Andrei and Pierre, Stiva and Levin, Anna and Natasha), as well as his deep appreciation of the manifold situations and problems confronting individuals and groups in every walk of life. While there are traces in these books of his later, unique emphasis upon inner spiritual values, such ideas are subordinated, on the whole, to a wider and more tolerant concern with all types of human problems. His descriptions of the significance of war, peace, marriage, childbirth, divorce, etc., raise many more questions than he answers by the tenets of his later spiritualistic programme. About 1876 he became acutely unhappy. In *Anna Karenina*, towards the end, we find Levin speculating upon religious matters and dwelling a great deal upon death. In his *A Confession*, Tolstoi repeats these experiences as his own. He tells us that he was himself amazed that a healthy man, blessed with every valuable thing and relation imaginable, should suddenly find himself on the brink of

suicide. He tells us that he arrived at a complete pessimism, strengthened by his acquaintance with the views of Buddha, *Ecclesiastes*, and Schopenhauer. He was seeking for something of unique and eternal significance, and, like Koheleth, was unable to find it anywhere in human life. His first step towards a solution of his problem was the abandonment of reason as the faculty which can give us any significant answers to life's deeper questionings. Both in his account of Levin's inward doubts and in *A Confession*, he shows markedly the influence of Schopenhauer. He says that he tried to substitute for Schopenhauer's transcendent will, with its negation of all individuality, a kind of transcendent love. He soon decided that this was a shallow, inadequate substitution. He tried for a while to accept the Hegelian conclusion that there is a type of insight, hidden from all individuals but manifesting itself to a group of individuals, the Church; and returned for a time to the orthodoxy of his childhood. In doing so he found himself repelled by the experiences to which he was forced to submit. Finally he turned to the New Testament Gospels. Growing out of this study came his defence of the values of inner spiritual living with which we are concerned. As a result of his views, he dressed like a peasant, learned a manual trade, and became a vegetarian. He spent the rest of his life embodying his doctrines in plays, pamphlets, and novels, and gained a band of disciples. A few days before his death he left his home to go into retirement.

IMPENDING DESTRUCTION AS THE KEY TO TOLSTOI'S VIEWS

From the beginning of his questionings concerning the meaning of human life, and throughout his later years when the fruits of these questionings were determining his answers to all practical problems, as well as his general way of living, Tolstoi was acutely obsessed with one idea, the idea of impending destruction. Unlike Lao-tse's relatively dispassionate assertion that significance lies in the world-Reason, and unlike Koheleth's

sense of disillusionment, Tolstoi's search for some inner criterion of the meaning of life was due to a fear of immediate, tragic extinction. This idea appears again and again in his writings.

He compares himself to a man lost in a forest who climbs a tree and fails to see his home in the limitless distance. He re-descends and fails to find it in the darkness of the forest. He compares mankind to a crowd of helpless people in boats being swept towards the rapids. Most of them have cast away their oars and are laughing and making merry. All of them assure him that no other direction is possible.

I saw before me nothing but destruction, towards which I was rushing, and which I feared. I saw no safety anywhere, and I did not know what to do; but, looking back, I perceived innumerable boats which unceasingly and strenuously pushed across the stream, and I remembered about the shore, the oars, and the direction, and began to pull back upwards against the stream and towards the shore. That shore was God; that direction was tradition; the oars were the freedom given me to pull for the shore and unite with God. And so the force of life was renewed in me, and I again began to live.¹²

He dwells continually on death: "Death, death, death awaits you every second." Like the virgins in the Biblical story, we must be ready to meet this bridegroom at any time. In the tone of Marcus Aurelius, he tells us to remember the possibility that every moment may be our last.

He compares himself and erring mankind to a man who is sinking in water. When a rope is thrown to him, instead of taking it, he asks to be confirmed in his faith that the rope will save him. Children jump from a ship into the water. They are temporarily held up by the current and their clothes. A rope is thrown to them. But they foolishly believe that their clothes will not soon be soaked, that their arms will not become tired, and that they will not gasp and choke and die; hence they do not believe that the rope is necessary. The rope represents a life

¹² Leo Tolstoi, *A Confession*, Maude's translation, Oxford, 1932, pp. 78-79. By permission of the publishers.

of spirituality; only by grasping it can mankind escape from inevitable ruin.

THE MEANING OF LIFE FOR TOLSTOI

In order to save himself, Tolstoi works out a theoretical and a practical programme. In the first he sets forth his beliefs about the meaning of life in general, and in the second he formulates a plan of conduct in conformity with those beliefs. Perhaps the most dramatic expression of his basic convictions is put into the mouth of Prince Andrei lying on the field of battle at Austerlitz: "Nothing, nothing is certain except the insignificance of all within my comprehension, and the majesty of that which is incomprehensible but all-important." Something beyond the individual is supremely important. Tolstoi believed that he had found what Koheleth had sought and failed to find. Hence he was glad, while Koheleth remained sad. What, precisely, is the supremely significant "something"? Is such unique meaning a part of the "inner" life, or is it other-worldly in the sense of lying beyond all human beings? In a psychological sense, Tolstoi is not defending an inner life. He does not believe that the personal consciousness of the individual embodies anything of unique value. Nor is his view other-worldly in the literal sense of centring meaning in some other life into which a person will be literally reborn. He repudiates personal immortality, restoration, or resuscitation after death, but he believes in the mingling of all individual minds in the super-consciousness or will of God in such a way that a mystical humanity is resurrected and immortal. You shall live and not die, not in a personal sense, but in the sense that the race is promised immortality in God. Every individual is capable of turning from the impending, external destruction around him and gaining an inner assurance or faith of his connection with the eternal. The Kingdom of Heaven is within. God is still protecting the tree of eternal life, and anyone who lives accord-

ing to certain definite rules, abandoning a life of sensuality, power, cruelty, and the like, as well as the desire for personal immortality, is assured a place in its shade. Personal life is a deception, but there is something else which is true and not a deception; namely, the eternal source of life. We must abandon the illusion that our personal lives are something really existing and belonging to us, and realize that personal life gains meaning only through the fulfilment of the will of God. The attainment of inward spirituality and other-worldliness, in this sense, is possible and easy for us. If we continue to live according to the ideas of the world, we are not only destroyed, but in the interim we are forced to suffer much more than if we subscribe to Tolstoi's spiritual programme. The choice is an absolute one; either we follow Tolstoi (and, he says, Christ), in which case we give up the law of strife of this world, and become persecuted by evil men; or we remain disciples of this world and are tormented by everybody and most of all by ourselves. In the first case, our yoke is easy. There is a spiritual force in whose power we are, and to whom we should surrender ourselves. To know this force, God, is really to live. Such a unity with God involves our unity with all men in the programme of practical living which Tolstoi elaborates. To live in the way that religion prescribes is to receive "the only possible, reasonable and joyful meaning, indestructible by death."

THE PRACTICE OF LIFE FOR TOLSTOI

Tolstoi applies his religious views to many problems of conduct. He works out five commandments which he considers to be the essence of Christianity, and applies them to many situations in modern life. He then formulates certain basic tests of a happy life. The first commandment is that no anger is excusable, that we should forgive all, and forgive endlessly. This commandment must not be modified to mean that we should merely not be angry without a cause.

Who, asked I, is to be judge of when anger is timely? I have never seen angry people who considered their anger untimely. They all consider their anger just and useful.¹³

The second commandment is:

. . . Let every man, if he is not a eunuch—that is, if he needs sexual relations—have a wife, and each wife a husband, and let the husband have only *one* wife and the wife only *one* husband, and under no pretext infringe the sexual union of one with the other.¹⁴

Divorce is in no case justifiable, even because of infidelity. Love one woman. The third commandment is that all oaths are forbidden, including those demanded by the church, the state, and the military forces. Swear not at all. Fourthly comes the famous command of nonresistance. Resist not evil. Turn the other cheek. Do not punish the evil-doer. Lastly, be friendly towards the people of other nations and lands.

The practical outcome of these various commands will be not merely the spreading of universal forgiveness, the banishment of all anger and extra-marital sensuality, but the ending of all seeking of justice in law courts, all judicial punishments, capital and otherwise, all divorce, all military service and other forms of loyalty to one's state. There will be the spread of forgiveness, nonresistance to evil, and an increase of brotherly love between nations.

Besides obeying these commands, an individual ought to live, Tolstoi believed, in a certain definite fashion. A man should keep his union with nature unbroken. He "should live under the open sky, in the light of the sun and in the fresh air, in contact with the earth, with vegetation, and with animals." Most important of all he should experience that "greatest blessing of life—work," for which he should expect no reward. Such work should be of a voluntary kind that "one is fond of"; it should be physical, thus giving one a good appe-

¹³ Leo Tolstoi, *What I Believe*, Maude's translation, Oxford, 1932, p. 184.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

tite. Again, a man should have a family, including children, whom the parents themselves should bring up. Again, a man should have "amiable intercourse with all the different people of the world." This condition, as well as physical labour and contact with nature, requires the absence of wealth. Lastly, happiness requires also a healthy and painless death.

TOLSTOI AND WISE CONDUCT

Tolstoi's general theory of the meaning of life stresses the unique importance of the inner life of the soul. While his general views issue in specific injunctions concerning a way of living in this world, his emphasis remains throughout upon the importance of the spiritual integrity of the individual, his relation to God, and his search for ways and means of cementing and fortifying that relation. Consequently, while Tolstoi expounded a theory of human conduct, the general tenor of his position is other-worldly. Everything within our comprehension in this world pales in importance in comparison with the eternal life of humanity in God. This other-world theory has direct repercussions in Tolstoi's maxims of conduct. All of his rules for living are grounded upon the conviction that a man's standing in relation to eternity enters into, and determines, his whole mode of daily behaviour. Therefore an adequate appraisal of Tolstoi's ethical ideas must take into account both their other-worldly framework and the specific injunctions for human conduct which he formulates within that general point of view.

The sense of impending destruction and the consequent search for rescue or salvation are basic aspects of other-worldliness. A person may fear literal, physical disaster and death or a moral, spiritual corruption and annihilation. If the death which Tolstoi warns us about is physical only, the menace is quite different in the lives of different people. Everyone stands in the shadow of physical death. Nevertheless, there are longer and shorter shadows. Statistical tables show us that human beings at the ages of four, twenty-four, forty-four, and sixty-

four, any one of whom may die the next moment, are, however, subject to immediate death in quite varying degrees of probability. In other words, they stand, in general, at quite different distances from the source of the shadow. The fact that any of them may die at once does not diminish the high probability that some of them will die much sooner than others. Judged from an extremely great distance in time, seventy years is not much longer than seven. Yet the deaths of persons of seven and seventy, respectively, are usually judged to be remarkably different. In the one case, we deplore the unnaturalness of the event and lament the fact that one of the little ones so blessed in spirit has been lost to us; or we take a relatively external view and recognize the fact that less has been built up and hence less destroyed. In the other case, we acquiesce in the natural and expected death of the aged; or we lament the end of what has developed so fruitfully over a long period of years. In any case, we make some distinction between the two deaths. While some kind of physical death hangs over everyone, this situation can hardly be changed, and a person who dwells unduly upon this fact may find himself unnerved for whatever tasks his life brings with it.

If, however, Tolstoi's warning concerns primarily a kind of impending spiritual annihilation or destruction, his appeal is convincing only if the dangers which he depicts are real ones. In many periods of history, people have cried out that the works of the world are evil and that the struggle of individuals and societies to achieve external well-being is blighted and accursed. Many people merely smile at such other-worldliness. Both the mystic and the worldling are right from their own point of view. What the former wants, the latter neither has nor seeks. What the latter wants, the former repudiates. The strength and the validity of Tolstoi's appeal depend largely upon the way in which the issues are stated. If there is a basic and irreconcilable opposition between the "evil" of the world and the "good" which the mystic or salvationist offers, the mere

statement of this antithesis implies that the latter path ought to be chosen with no reservations or regrets. If, however, the issue is not between "good" and "evil" so much as between two competing sets of "goods," the one-sidedness of Tolstoi's claims becomes evident. If both the "inner" life and the world of "outer" striving bring challenges to good and evil, to wise and foolish conduct, there is no reason to abandon either phase of living solely on the ground that some blindness and foolishness is bound up with it. Tolstoi's search for inward spiritual values rules out from the start any effort to complement such a quest with equally painstaking attempts to achieve political well-being, justice, economic security, a wise use of modern industry, etc. If a search for these external values is filled with dangers to the human soul, then for the same reason the other-worldly man's pursuit of salvation imperils the values of external well-being and political justice. Neither sphere of human endeavour deserves to be abandoned solely on the ground that it embodies potential evils as well as goods. Tolstoi's view is one-sided because he assumes that every claim to inward spirituality is a true claim, and that every tie with the world is an evil tie. The first assumption opens the door to fanaticism; the latter to anarchy. Wise conduct must have its source in the character of the man of inward spiritual excellence, but it must carry over and include the political and social welfare of human beings in our present external scene. Any theory of conduct which ignores either of these factors does not point to the wise way.

Tolstoi's theories are one-sided not only because of their general other-worldliness, but also because of his specific tenets of conduct. Tolstoi's five commandments err rather by oversimplification than by failing to contain any kernel of truth whatsoever. If all traces of anger could be eliminated from the hearts of men, the world would certainly be a great deal improved. Rage easily puts on a cloak of righteousness. Yet that passion is not easily eradicable from human nature. If an ethical idea is measured by its fruits as well as by the ideal it

embodies, probably Aristotle's advocacy of tempered passions points to a wiser way than Tolstoi's blunt rejection of the feeling of anger. Passions apparently eliminated have a habit of reviving with marked potency when least expected.

Likewise, Tolstoi's injunction to marriage for all, and complete marital fidelity, represents a wise, general ideal. He ignores, however, certain complicating factors. Does the need for sexual relations always carry with it the indubitable assurance of a spiritual bond? Is divorce always imprudent and wrong? While many, if not most, divorces are unjustified and foolish, some of them hardly deserve the label of unwisdom. If two persons, thrown together in a heat of foolish passion, with or without wine, make a serious attempt to follow Tolstoi's commandment and remain together in marriage, success in such an attempt is not *ipso facto* a sign of prudence or wisdom. Furthermore, if every man except a eunuch ought to marry, does the same command hold for every woman? In many societies women are unable easily and with decorum to follow Tolstoi's command, even if they believe it to be wise. Are all unmarried women to be considered to live foolishly because of their single state?

Tolstoi's exhortation to swear no oaths at the behest of the church, the state, or military forces, and his admonition not to resist evil, are the bases of his social anarchy. This teaching, like the parallel views of Lao-tse, involves certain marked limitations. The anarchist offers no effective solution of the many problems of group conduct merely by favouring a widespread abandonment of governmental machinery, law courts, churches, etc. Instruments which may be used wisely or foolishly ought not to be cast aside solely because the latter mode of use is widespread. Until human beings devise some way of eliminating the causes of political injustice and crime by effecting a change in the hearts of men, these evils must be resisted. Possibly at times even capital punishment is justified. Similarly, Tolstoi's crusade in favour of nonresistance in war-time and his

unmitigated disapproval of all wealth, leisure, and city life mark the tendency of the other-worldly man to indict wide areas and modes of human living, while offering little or no practical advice concerning how they may be abandoned or what is to replace them.

Probably the world will always contain a much wider variety of types of human character than the one kind which Tolstoi seeks to spread. Human individuals and societies will probably continue to face many more problems of conduct than those for which Tolstoi's official answers supply the wise solution. The conditions which produce law courts, government, and armies are not to be eliminated easily. The types of persons that marry foolishly are rather widespread. City life promises to remain with us for a long time on a broader scale than Tolstoi could have imagined. Many kinds of work are needed other than manual labour in the open air. Nonresistance, forgiveness of evil, marital fidelity, and a love of the people of other countries may indeed increase beyond the present dreams of men. Whether these sentiments will ever become universally present in human hearts remains a highly theoretical question.

The possibility of a widespread failure of Tolstoi's other-worldly programme will not dishearten the person who seeks wisdom in conduct. Perhaps there is a realm of supreme importance beyond human comprehension. Possibly everything that surrounds human life is relatively unimportant when judged by some superhuman standard. Until human beings have more assurance about these matters than Tolstoi offers, they should not be disheartened by the continued appearance of difficulties in conduct, and of goals in life still to be won. Pending such assurance, there is much to be done. Tolstoi's attempt to bend all ethical problems to fit a formula of inward spiritual well-being must be abandoned, not because his conception is entirely false, but because, as in the cases of other one-sided accounts of ethics, its truth is quite restricted. It provides, indeed, a valuable aid in exposing the limitations of such

theories of the good as hedonism and the worship of sheer power, as well as of an undue preoccupation with problems of social and political reform. Wise conduct will bow before it, however, and not under it.

SUMMARY

The views of Lao-tse, Koheleth, and Tolstoi stand for the general belief that the inward life of the spirit is the sole locus of ethical value. This position is rejected as false not because of its belief in the reality of the inner life of men, but rather because it means that such inner values must be stressed at the expense of every other consideration. Inward excellence is one of the major factors in wisdom in conduct. Without it every possible external benefit becomes bereft of significance. Yet excellence or virtue implies a participation in the tasks of human living, both personal and group. A man is, to a large extent, what he does. Any inner life which does not find expression in conduct is apt to lose whatever excellence it initially possessed. These matters we shall consider in greater detail after we have examined another distorted view of ethics, the theory that the group is the sole locus of ethical value.

CHAPTER V

IS THE GROUP THE SOLE LOCUS OF ETHICAL VALUE?

IN the preceding chapter several conceptions of ethics were treated which ignore all questions of external, political and social well-being, in a search for inward, spiritual values. Here certain other views will be considered which stress the supreme importance of human conduct in various public groups. Echoing the voice of Plato, some modern political thinkers tell us that in the nation-state we live and move and have our being. The state is our mother, and we owe our very life to her. She should supervise our goings out and our comings in, our family life, our relation to our children and friends, and even our very innermost thoughts. This view is espoused in its most undiluted form in the writings of Hegel. On the other hand, Karl Marx tells us that the group which is and ought to be the be-all and end-all of our existence, is our economic class. Personal morality achieves itself only in and through our economic relations to our class, and for most people this means, in Marx's opinion, the working class. In gentle, at times plaintive, voices, Comte, Jane Addams, and the sociologists play the same tune with a slight variation. Personality is a social product. Only in and through "organic" society, the Social Organism, Social Humanity, and the like, may we gain our full stature as individuals. These three different conceptions of ethics—of Hegel, Marx, and the sociologists—agree in stressing the supreme importance of group life. We shall turn, therefore, successively to the views of Hegel, Marx, Comte, and Jane Addams, not to demonstrate that group problems form an unimportant segment of ethics, but merely to show that an exclusive concern with those problems is one-sided and inadequate.

THE LIFE OF HEGEL

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was born at Stuttgart, Germany. As a school boy in Stuttgart he showed a special interest in the Greek and Roman classics. In 1788 he entered the University of Tübingen as a student of theology. He spent much of his time studying the classics and art, and in 1793, when he took his theological certificate, he was appraised as only moderately industrious, and somewhat deficient in philosophy. Upon leaving college he became a private tutor in Bern, and for the next four years he turned his attention, under the influence of Kant and Lessing, to the New Testament Gospels, with a desire to reconcile Christianity with certain leading tenets and attitudes of Greek philosophy. In 1797 his friend Hölderlin, the poet, obtained a position for him as a tutor in Frankfort. During this period Hegel turned seriously to questions of social and political philosophy, and began to work out the leading tenets of his famous philosophical system. About 1802 he became associated with Schelling at Jena in the publication of a philosophical journal, and began his lectures on philosophy. In 1806 he continued to hold his lectures while Napoleon defeated the Prussians. In 1811 he married, and the marriage was eminently successful. Becoming professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin in 1818, he enjoyed international renown and the confidence and admiration of the Prussian government. His most important works were *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), which Professor Lowenberg tells us is the most living and important of his works on general philosophy; *The Science of Logic* (1812-1816); *The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline* (1817); and, most important for our purposes, *The Basic Principles of the Philosophy of Right* (or Law) (1821). In addition, Hegel lectured widely upon such topics as the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of history, and esthetics.

HEGEL'S THEORY OF ORGANIC UNITY

As we have noted, the physicists' successful computation of the motions of bodies provided Hobbes with a model for his theory of the behaviour of human beings. The all-inclusiveness of the formulae of Newtonian physics guided Kant in his search for the laws of ethics. On the other hand, Hegel lived in an age in which the science of biology was making the greatest strides. Unlike Kant in his indebtedness to Newton, Hegel cannot be shown to have been directly influenced by any individual biologist or biological theory. In fact, some of the more striking biological doctrines, such as Darwin's theory of natural selection, were formulated after the death of Hegel. However, he frequently used biological analogies, and his conception of the state can be most clearly understood in terms of these.

Consider, for example, a human hand that has been amputated. It still exists, but it lacks the vital relation with the rest of the body which is essential to its life. In Hegel's terms, the hand is abstract and unreal rather than concrete and real. Its reality and its vitality are dependent upon an organic relation subsisting between it and the total human body or organism. Every plant, animal, and human being is an organic unity. They are not composed of "atomic" parts whose nature and existence come first, but of members each drawing its sustenance from the whole organism. A living human body is more than hands, arms, legs, heart, lungs, nervous system, etc. It is all of these things united in a special kind of relation called organic or functional. The test of the reality of a thing is its existence as such an organic unity. These organic relations pervade everything. In stones and planets, in plants and animals, and in human societies and nation-states, organic relations bind together things which at first glance seem independent and unrelated. What seem to be simpler organic wholes are actually included in a wider, more complete unity. For example, hands, lungs, etc., are organically related to a human body, but human

bodies are related, equally organically, to parents and children, to the soil which yields food, to the sun that yields light and heat, and to the very atmosphere that they breathe.

THE IDEA OF CHANGE: HEGEL'S DIALECTIC OF OPPOSITES

In the inorganic, organic, and human realms, everything is changing, growing, striving. An acorn growing into an oak is changing in a way that is typical of all change. In one sense, the acorn is becoming what it is *not*, for an acorn is surely not an oak. To become an oak, it must cease to be an acorn. In another sense, it is becoming what it *is*, for an acorn realizes itself (that is, the wider and deeper principles of its own nature) only by becoming an oak. Throughout the emergence of the very different qualities of the oak, there is unity; this unity in difference is the principle of all change.

The change from an acorn to an oak is, however, only half of the story. In the same way that the acorn is both annihilating itself and becoming its truer self in changing to an oak, so the oak is annihilating itself and becoming its true self by dropping new acorns. Paradoxically, both the acorn and the oak become what they most basically are only in ceasing to be themselves. The oak is, in Hegel's language, the negation of the acorn, while the new acorns are the negation of the negation. This process, expanded and applied to everything in nature and human life, is dialectic. In the first negation, a thing (thesis) is confronted with the contradiction of itself (antithesis). In the second negation, the contradiction is resolved by a third thing (synthesis) unifying the first two, and overcoming the contradiction. The passage from the thesis through the antithesis to the synthesis is the dialectic of opposites.

HEGEL'S THEORY OF THE NATION-STATE

Hegel applied the theory of the dialectic of opposites to the problems of social and political philosophy. The family is the thesis; the (civic) community the antithesis; and the nation-

state the synthesis. In family life, individuals gain their earliest training. There they develop their inner life, their private consciences, and feelings of personal loyalty. Families and individual citizens project their individual wills and personalities into the outer life of the community. Persons have the legal right to acquire, hold, and dispose of property. They have parallel duties to respect this right in others. Persons have the right to make contracts; they have the duty to fulfil such contracts with others. These activities concern legal right (*Recht*). In addition, however, persons have moral rights and duties. They find their own individual and family well-being dependent upon the conduct of others; they find their own conduct affecting the well-being of others. Thus there arise sets of ethical claims and counterclaims (*Moralität*). Both legal rights and duties as well as ethical claims and counterclaims make themselves effective beyond the confines of private, individual, or family life. The individual and the family find in the wider (civic) community their opposite and yet an arena for their own self-expression. The thesis is confronted by the antithesis.

But the family and the community are not separate units. The husband and wife both come from the community in grounding a family, and their children return to it when they are grown. Like the acorn-oak-acorn relation, the family represents merely one phase of a process which generates the community, while the community represents the source of new families. Underlying this process of continuing circular development, there is the organic whole, the synthesis—the nation-state. The family, the arena of personal life, generates at once legal rights and duties, as well as moral claims and counterclaims. The community is the meeting ground of the families. It is “the arena for the contest of the private interests of all against all.” It is an “association occasioned by needs and is preserved by law, which secures one’s person and property, and by an external system for private and common interests.” In

the nation-state, however, all these conflicts are resolved. In it the conflict between individuals and families in legal and ethical matters are seen to be but phases of one inclusive organic life. For the rights of one section of the community are really identical with the duties of another, and vice versa. The family is merely the community expressing the private aims and interests of its members; the community is simply the totality of private aims and interests gaining full public expression. Both the family and the community are but phases of the life of the nation-state. The family corresponds to the sensibility of an organism; the community to its irritability; the nation-state "to the actual nervous system as an internally organized whole." "The state is the realized ethical idea or ethical spirit. . . . The state is the march of God in the world. . . . The idea of the state has direct actuality in the individual state. . . . The state, which is the nation's spirit, is the law which permeates all its relations, ethical observances, and the consciousness of its individuals." All personal conduct is a phase of the career of the nation-state.

THE POWER OF THE NATION-STATE

There have been many defences of the absolute power of nation-states over individuals. Plato, as we have found, endowed the guardians or legislators of his two ideal states with unlimited authority. In the *Laws*, it is asserted that individuals were to be persuaded to agree freely to obey the laws, but if the persuasive preludes were not effective, coercion would follow. Thomas Hobbes was the most candid of the authoritarians. Having no very high opinion of the ability of wholly selfish individuals to follow any train of reasoning which ran counter to their self-interest, he frankly advocated the forceful use of the big stick. The sovereign has the power and hence the right to control his subjects completely. Quoting *Samuel*, he said,

This shall be the Right of the King you will have to reigne over you. He shall take your sons, and set them to drive his Chariots, and to be his horsemen, and to run before his Chariots; and gather in his harvest; and to make his engines of War, and Instruments of his chariots; and shall take your daughters to make perfumes, to be his Cookes, and Bakers. He shall take your fields, your vine-yards, and your olive-yards, and give them to his servants. He shall take the tyth of your corne and wine, and give it to the men of his chamber, and to his other servants. He shall take your man-servants, and your maid-servants, and the choice of your youth, and employ them in his businesse. He shall take the tyth of your flocks; and you shall be his servants.¹

In such a nation-state, there would be no Magna Charta or Bill of Rights, and no pretence of governing by the consent of the citizens. The might of the sovereign would constitute his right.

Hobbes was keenly alive to certain types of influences and competing loyalties which tended to weaken the power of the sovereign. (1) He deplored any division or limitation of sovereignty, particularly in favour of any ecclesiastical institution. Loyalty to a church is particularly dangerous politically if the church is not a part and parcel of the state. (2) He regarded loyalty to conscience as dangerous. Hobbes realized that on occasions the believers in the absolute authority of conscience can be extremely stubborn opponents of the state.² (3) He warned of "the poison of the seditious doctrine . . . that every private man is Judge of Good and Evil actions." Even the idea that an individual may follow his own processes of ethical evaluation is inimical to the stability of political authority. Consistent with his belief that political authority is

¹ I Samuel, VIII, 11-17; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Pt. 2, Chap. XX, Everyman's Library, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York, p. 108.

² "When two, or more men, know of one and the same fact, they are said to be Conscious of it one to another; which is as much as to know it together. . . . Afterwards, men made use of the same word metaphorically, for the knowledge of their own secret facts, and secret thoughts. . . . And last of all, men, vehemently in love with their own new opinions (though never so absurd) and obstinately bent to maintain them, gave those their opinions also that revered name of Conscience, as if they would have it seem unlawfull, to change or speak against them. . . ." *Leviathan*, Pt. 1, Chap. VII, Everyman's Library, Dutton, p. 31.

imposed upon the citizens from without and above, Hobbes noted the dangers in these three doctrines, and held that the strong state will simply combat and eradicate them. Such authoritarianism is obvious, and hence, however brutal it may become, it is at least not insidious. It calls a spade a spade.

Hegel, on the other hand, not merely defends the absolute power and authority of the nation-state, but seeks to show that other apparently competing influences and allegiances realize their true ends only in and through the state. The church, a person's private conscience, and his processes of ethical evaluation, seem, in Hegel's opinion, at times to be hostile to the ends and aims of the nation-state. In fact, however, they are not only never really hostile to those public ends and aims, but they cannot even achieve their own specific purposes except in and through the state. Any church which dares to urge upon its members a path of conduct inimical to the aims of the state is not only pursuing a politically inexpedient course, but also one that is incompatible with true religion and spirituality. Hegel mentions the Friends (Quakers) as a case in point, and condemns them not only as frequently bad citizens, but also as failing to achieve the kind of attitude that is genuinely religious. The churchmen on both sides in a war, who prayed to the same God for victory for their respective nation-states would have been considered by Hegel to be seeking a truer type of religious aim.

Likewise, Hegel considers that the believers in the authority of conscience open the door to the most extravagant caprice and fanaticism in private conduct. He rejects such an inward authority, however, not because its conclusions are at times at variance with the art of wise individual living, but in order to introduce an equally dogmatic, external authority, the nation-state. Every attempt of an individual to judge for himself what is good and evil degenerates inevitably into a welter of good intentions not even indicative of the private well-being of the person, and even less commensurate with the welfare of the

state. Because of their private scope and narrow range, private discrimination, evaluation, and choice lead a person, in Hegel's opinion, to futile individual volition that is unable to pass over into deeds. "The laurels of mere willing are dry leaves, which have never been green." Church loyalty, conscience, and private ethical evaluation are blind and narrow save as they bend themselves with no reservations or regrets entirely to the "general will" of the state.

FREEDOM IN THE NATION-STATE

The notion of a general will was derived by Hegel from Jean Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau began his political thinking with a theory of a state of nature in which noble, isolated savages were naturally "free" from all political restraint and corrupting civilization. Civilized society arose by a social contract. Unlike the subjects in a commonwealth as conceived by Hobbes, the citizens of Rousseau's state, however, achieved their later political, as opposed to their earlier natural, freedom, in and through a subservience to the general will. While Rousseau was not very explicit as to what precisely constituted the general will, he held specifically that such a will was not a mere aggregate of individual wills, and on this particular point he anticipated Hegel's view. Rousseau put it thus:

Indeed, each individual may, as a man, have a particular will contrary to or unlike the general will which he has as a citizen; his particular interest may speak to him quite differently from the common interest; his absolute and naturally independent existence may make him regard what he owes to the common cause as a gratuitous contribution, the loss of which would be less injurious to others than its payment is burdensome to himself; and considering the moral person which is the state as an abstraction (*être de raison*), because it is not a man, he would enjoy the rights of the citizen without consenting to fulfil the duties of the subject—an injustice the progress of which would cause the ruin of the body politic.

In order, then, that the social pact may not be a vain formula, it

tacitly includes the covenant, which alone can confer binding force on the others, that whoever shall refuse to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body, which means nothing else than that he will be *forced to be free*.³

To the extent that Rousseau in this reference advocated the subservience of individuals to processes of law, with resulting rights for themselves and duties towards others, he meant merely liberty under law. With this conception, only an anarchist would quarrel. But Rousseau implied a good deal beyond this. The state is not only the sets of accepted customs and laws *under* which an individual has certain rights and duties; it is a moral person with a will, the general will. As such it burrows into the very inward lives and characters of the citizens, generating in their hearts and minds an organic segment of itself. No longer is authority imposed from above and without, but it creeps into the very temple of a person's mind and claims as its own his processes of individual discrimination and evaluation. A citizen may protest that, while he does not want to do what the state requires, at least he is willing to abandon in the interest of society his own wishes in favour of those of the law. Such compliance and acquiescence would have satisfied the Hobbesian sovereign; in fact, it would be all that such a ruler would hope to obtain on many occasions. Not so with Rousseau and Hegel. The citizen must not only be forced to obey the decrees of the general will but he must also become convinced that his own processes of moral discrimination and evaluation (his very own will) lead to the same course as that which the state commands. Not only is his conduct constrained and controlled; in addition, he is expected to convince himself that such coercion is at every point the expression of his own "free" choice. He is forced to be free.

³ J. J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I, Chap. VII, quoted by Bernard Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, Macmillan, 1899, p. 95. (Italics ours.) By permission of the publishers.

LIMITATIONS IN HEGEL'S THEORY OF THE STATE

A general criticism of Hegel's theories might attack his contention that organic wholes are the model of all real things. Life shows, indeed, many striking examples of organic unities in plants and animals in which the whole apparently sustains the parts. By analogy, even solar systems possess the unifying features of space and time. By a somewhat weaker analogy, human thinking and human societies are like these organic relations and processes. These likenesses, however, are no evidence that the wider group is always more real or valuable than its component parts. Individuals are no less real, free, and valuable than families; families no less so than a civic community; and a civic community no less so than a state. There is a partial truth in Hegel's contentions that nation-states provide and guard many values in the lives of individuals. Some ethical values receive assurance and stability in and through common law, statutes, and equity. Neither Lao-tse's programme of social anarchy nor Comte's ideally developed Social Organism (which we have yet to discuss) adequately supplants values now guaranteed by legal systems within states. When, however, Hegel singles out the nation-state as the march of God on earth, either this idea is to be taken literally, in which case a conception of religion is presupposed and not demonstrated, or Hegel means only that the state is the most important and inclusive ethical unit in which all values, powers, rights, and duties are centred. Even this second view is a decidedly one-sided conception of ethics. While individuals are often weak, passionate, blind, and foolish, wise living derives, in the final analysis, from the thoughts and deeds of persons. Even social customs and legal rights and sanctions are not provided by an all-inclusive unit, the nation-state, but are the products of the discrimination and evaluation of individual minds applied to the problems of group living. Legal forms and political procedures are the fruits of individual thought and experimenta-

tion, and sometimes are won only by centuries of trial and error. In addition to legal codes and political principles, a large number of ethical values centre entirely in individual lives. The inner life of individuals is not composed entirely of unchecked fanaticism and pure caprice.

Let us also examine the view of Rousseau and Hegel that an individual is forced to be free by submitting to the general will of the state. Suppose little Johnny has misbehaved. His mother says, "John, you must remain in this room while I go to the store. I am not going to lock the door, but you must choose to remain inside voluntarily." Whereupon the little fellow sits in the room of his own accord. Now, if the mother leaves the door unlocked, Johnny is freely doing what she has commanded. In this case, he is free, because he is not being forced to do anything. Suppose, however, the mother, in spite of her words, actually locks the door. In this case, whatever she has said, she is exercising coercion in the manner of a Hobbesian sovereign. The fact that Johnny thinks that he is freely choosing to stay in the room is quite irrelevant in this case. He is being forced, and he is not free. The parent would be generating by deception a belief in Johnny's mind that he was freely choosing to stay, whereas in fact he was merely being forced to do so. Johnny would be experiencing the insidious Hegelian type of freedom. To make it show its true colours he would need only to try to open the door.

In brief, Hegel tries to preserve the prestige and inward freedom of conscience and personal choice in the form of what he calls the subjective will, and yet at the same time to maintain that the genuine, sacred renderings of conscience will be found to coincide at every point with the system of external social and legal sanctions in the state. In reality this position opens the door to a much greater hypocrisy than any of the forms of self-deception which Hegel scornfully labels individual hypocrisy and caprice. Either the commands of the state conform to the renderings of the individual conscience or they

do not. If they do, the commands of these two different authorities seem to coalesce, and in this case obedience to the state enables the individual also to follow his inward convictions, while acting upon his inward convictions becomes at the same time obedience to the state. Hegel forgot, however, Kant's distinction between acting merely in conformity with duty and acting from duty alone.⁴ However much or little wisdom there is in either idea, the two ideas are different. In joining the army, a citizen, let us suppose, obeys either the state or his conscience. In spite of Hegel's scorn for intentions, a man may join the army for the one reason or for the other. If conscience is the unique authority, joining the army because the state commands it is conduct merely *in conformity with* duty; while acting solely *from* duty will involve joining the army only because conscience issues this command. The results will be the same as far as uniforms, rifle and bayonet practice are concerned, but the two types of conduct are essentially different. Even when conscience and the state command the same thing, there is no genuine identity of the two authorities. A man either acts freely, or he is forced to act. He is never forced to be free.

On the other hand, the hypocrisy implicit in Hegel's view becomes even more obvious when the commands of the state and those of conscience are at odds. If the state commands a man to join the army and his conscience commands him to refrain from doing so, either he does unwillingly what he is forced to do and is in no sense free, or he freely follows his conscience despite the ignominy he may suffer for his pacifism. In neither case is he forced to be free. Neither conscience nor deliberate ethical discrimination and choice can be submerged in any broader synthetic unity of what the individual wills and what the state commands, whether the acts involved are the same or different.

Let us be consistent. Either the power of the state is and

⁴ Cf. above, pp. 32-33.

ought to be absolute, as Hobbes held, but in no sense can the individual writhing under it be called free, or political authority and systems of law are derived from the consent of the governed, and in some measure all government limits the freedom of individuals. In the first case the citizen bows expediently before a force which he recognizes to be all-powerful, necessary, and good; but he makes no attempt to find his freedom under its yoke. In the second case, the citizen seeks to discriminate carefully between the powers which are placed in the hands of the government and the areas of personal conduct that are preserved untouched and untouchable by all social, political, or legal controls. In the opinion adhered to in this book, the second alternative is the wise way. Its implications can be made clear by considering particular situations in personal and group living.

In general, then, Hegel's theory of ethics represents a complete subordination of personal conduct to the ends and aims of a nation-state. Unlike Hobbes, he effects this subordination not in the name of sovereignty but in the name of the very freedom of the individual which he in fact destroys. A citizen must obey the state in any and every situation, and at the same time he must believe that such obedience is the path to wise and free living. The group becomes the sole locus of ethical values.

THE LIFE OF KARL MARX

At the same time that Hegel's theory of the state was being developed by his various successors and was receiving confirmation by the increasingly important rôle which nation-states were playing in history, some of his views were being altered to serve ends which he had hardly envisaged. Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883), the son of a Jewish lawyer, was born in Treves (Rhenish Prussia). In 1824 the whole family became Protestants by baptism. Marx went to school in Treves, later studying at the Universities of Bonn and Berlin. His first interest was in law, but he turned later to history and philosophy, and in 1841

received the degree of doctor of philosophy. In Berlin he was closely associated with a small circle of Hegelians led by Bruno and Edgar Bauer. With them he transformed what he called Hegel's sacred history of the categories (the dialectic of opposites) into the profane history of mankind's methods of economic production and production relations. In 1842 Marx became one of the editors of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, which was extremely radical for that time, and which was suppressed in the following year. In 1843 he married Jenny von Westphalen, who stood by him throughout the many trying years of his career until her death in 1881. In 1843 Marx went to Paris, where he met Friedrich Engels, who became his collaborator in working out and spreading his socialistic doctrines. In 1847 the two worked out the *Communist Manifesto*, which became a classic exposition of Marxian theory and tactics. Expelled from Prussia in 1848 for revolutionary activity, Marx settled in London, where he remained for the rest of his life. He lived in extreme poverty, receiving a mere pittance for articles which he wrote for the *New York Tribune*. His children all died young. He became the leader of the International Working Men's Association, guiding its revolutionary activities with great skill. Meanwhile he was interested in the various political developments on the Continent, especially in the short-lived supremacy of the Paris Commune in 1870. He carried on an active correspondence, carefully pointing out the differences between his principles of revolutionary communism and such parallel movements as the socialism of Lassalle and the anarchism of Bakunin. His main scholarly work was his study of economics, *Das Kapital*. Among his other important works were *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in which he attacked the pseudo-socialism of Proudhon; *A Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right*; and *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, a criticism of the philosophical anarchism of Bruno Bauer, the exaggerated individualism of Stirner, and the older "static" materialism of Feuerbach.

Among his followers, Marx's preoccupation with, and appreciation of, the Hegelian philosophy have been the cause of mixed feelings. Such Marxians as Plekhanov, Trotsky, and Max Eastman look upon the Hegelian influence as more or less unfortunate and harmful. On the other hand, Engels and Lenin took Marx at his own word when he expressed his fundamental indebtedness to the great German Idealist. Some Marxists believe that the master's advocacy of the revolution was so fundamental that all attempts to realize the triumph of the working class by peaceful means represent a betrayal of his deeper insight. Others, however, stress his belief that different times call for different methods, pointing out that modifications in political and economic conditions since Marx's death justify an attempt to achieve his aims peacefully within the legal framework of the various existing nation-states. The difference between these two interpretations of Marx is roughly the difference between revolutionary communism and evolutionary socialism.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS ECONOMIC CLASS

Like Hegel, Marx insisted that ethical values in private lives are subordinate to the aims and achievements of the group. Hegel attempted to reconcile the subservience of the individual to the state with individual freedom; Marx made a corresponding attempt to base private morality entirely upon the welfare of economic classes. He believed that ethical values, together with art and religion, are mere by-products of economic conditions. For example, the Christian virtues of poverty, humility, unselfishness, and the like, matched, in his opinion, the economic status of the serf in feudal times. The utilitarianism of Bentham he traced to the rise of the business and trading class in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Religion he considered the opium of the people. Therefore, while Marx believed in no single criterion of ethical goodness for all societies, he stressed the rigid dependence of ethical,

esthetic, and religious values upon the social and political conditions into which an individual is born. These conditions rest, in turn, entirely upon economic factors—labour, forms of wealth, and types of tools.

Every attempt to guide the conduct of a person or a group by an appeal to individual self-interest, or even humanity, Marx believed, has the effect in the long run of merely fortifying and perpetuating the economic and political power of the class that happens to be dominant at the time. For example, while the attempts of the feudal nobility to preserve the Christian ideas of humility and poverty were not, in his opinion, a deliberate, hypocritical plan on their part to preserve the particular economic system in which they had power, nevertheless the spread of these ideas did in fact have such an effect. Similarly, in his own day, although Feuerbach's conception of a kind of religion of humanity and Stirner's vulgar glorification of the individual did not have as their motive the perpetuation of the power of the modern industrialist, yet these doctrines had substantially this result, since they caused members of the working class to forget their common revolutionary destiny.

Marx set himself, consequently, in active opposition to every theory of conduct which stresses the importance of the individual or of family life, because, in his opinion, such theories tend to weaken the worker's allegiance to the one, international labouring class. Conduct ought not to be egoistic, but also it ought not to be altruistic in favour of the public, the community, or the state. All such loyalties have as their inevitable result the perpetuation of the "economic slavery" of the working class. Sidney Hook states the Marxian position in language closely paralleling Rousseau's assertion that in the general will of the state the individual is forced to be free:

The general interest of the group of workers conflicts with the private interest of the individual in question. The individual as he finds himself at any definite moment can choose to throw in his lot with his fellow-workers at an immediate material loss or run the

risk of even a greater loss and restriction of freedom which comes from the absence of union organization. The question, however, is not only one of material interests. It is that, and something more. Every individual regards certain values of loyalty, sympathy, co-operation, as goods, too. They are part of that structure of values which defines the self. By throwing in his lot with his fellow-workers *his whole personality is fulfilled* in a way which would be impossible if he were to stand aside and alone.⁵

Not merely must the individual worker sacrifice some of his immediate, tangible, economic interests to gain similar, and possibly greater, material interests and security; he must also realize his whole personality only in and through his relation to the working class.

According to Marx, neither love of humanity nor mere egoism causes an individual to "find" his true self in his economic class. It is a matter of iron economic necessity. People are thrown together into classes by forces over which at the outset they have no control. The myth of the morally bad, sinister industrialist is not Marxian. The members of the economically powerful middle class, in possession of private property, money, and the instruments of production, are merely developing their personalities and wealth in a perfectly normal way. The spread of the industrial system, however, puts the individual industrialist and the individual worker more and more at the mercy of impersonal economic relations and "forces," crises, depressions, etc. This condition unites each of them more and more with others like himself. The result is a sharpening cleavage in society between the industrialists, or "capitalists," and the workers, or "proletariat," both groups becoming increasingly subjected to impersonal, ruthless, economic conditions. This subjection is the result of a division of labour which is bound up with the present modes of production under private ownership. The elimination of the division of labour

⁵ Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx*, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936, p. 182 (italics ours). By permission of the publishers.

can come about only by the development of trade and the powers of production to a point at which the system of private ownership will be seen to act drastically as a drawback and a hindrance. The elimination of private property can be achieved only by a development of many-sided individuals, capable of turning their different abilities to as many different types of activity as modern methods of production and trade require. Under the present system of a division of labour and private property, the enormous development of the powers of production will lead first to the increasing subjection of the workers and a sharpening of the struggle between classes, and later to the triumph of the workers through revolution.

Marx conceded that the ideal, classless, communistic society will not immediately follow the successful revolution of the workers. An intermediate period of political and economic control by the working class will be necessary. Even this period will be, in Marx's opinion, different in one striking way from the system of private industry which it replaces. Whereas all preceding societies had been dominated by economic and political conflicts and revolutions, the period of political domination by the triumphant working class will be marked by the disappearance of all further economic and political frictions and tensions. These forces will be replaced entirely by social, ethical, and cultural changes and growth. As these movements gain dominion over the hearts and conduct of men, the truly classless, communistic society will emerge, in which (1) the ethical well-being of the individual becomes identical with the welfare of all; (2) the dominant ethical principle is "from each according to his faculties, and to each according to his needs." This principle embodies the Marxian ideal.

What are the relative chances, according to Marx, for the development of the personal ethical values under the system of private enterprise, and in the communistic society? In society as constituted at present, these values remain the privilege of very few people.

The bourgeois claptrap about the family and education, about the hallowed correlation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting the more, by the action of modern industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour.⁶

In the communistic society, on the other hand, personal values would be possible in a new and different sense.

The communistic society is the only one in which the original and free development of the individual is not a mere phrase. Even such development continues to be determined, however, by the connection between individuals. It depends partly upon economic circumstances, partly upon the kind of solidarity requisite for the free development of *all*, and finally upon the many-sided types of activity allowed by the given modes of production. We are concerned here with individuals determined at every stage by a level of historic development, and not with any capricious individuality, quite apart from the necessary communistic revolution which itself will provide a common basis for such free development. Even individuals' consciousness of their mutual relations will be naturally quite different, and hence as little based upon a "principle of love" or devotion as upon egoism.⁷

In the classless society, not only will the new types of production relations—the relations between machines, workers, and products—assure equitable economic well-being for all, but, in addition, the very inward consciousness of individuals will become so refashioned that all such sentiments as personal love and devotion, and individual self-interest, will be discarded as relics of a less enlightened time. Once more in the name of the freedom and welfare of the individual, the group becomes the sole locus of ethical values.

MARXISM AND WISE CONDUCT

Any attempt dispassionately to evaluate Marx's conception of ethics is easily misunderstood. Unequivocal believers in the

⁶ *The Communist Manifesto*, II; *Handbook of Marxism*, Gollancz, 1935, p. 42.

⁷ Karl Marx, *Gesamtausgabe*, Marx-Engels Archiv Verlagsgesellschaft, c. 1927, I, 5, pp. 417-18 (present author's translation).

finality and efficacy of the system of private enterprise, aware of Marx's belief in an overthrow of that system, remain blind to the humanitarian motive in Marxism and refuse to admit the possibility of any element of wisdom in his ethical ideal. On the other hand, humanitarians and sentimentalists, as well as professed Marxists, mistake any attack upon Marxism for a defence of the evils which the system of modern industry has brought in its wake. There are, nevertheless, three questions which must be raised in any fair appraisal of Marxism: (1) Quite apart from all ethical considerations, is Marx's account of class struggle, determined at every phase by economic factors and pointing at present towards a workers' revolution, an accurate historical picture? (2) Assuming that widespread economic well-being—food, clothing, shelter, and an equitable share of goods for everyone—is at least one aspect of a desirable ethical goal, would a Marxian programme forward this aim, either before or after a revolution of workers? (3) Even on the assumption that a classless, communistic society, with economic well-being for all, could be achieved by the methods advocated by Marx, is such a society one which is desirable on ethical grounds?

A consideration of the first question must be quite tentative; a succession of doubts must not be confused with an elaborate refutation. Marx's theory of class struggle is a view that is debatable at almost every point. His account of the supreme rôle of economic factors in past history may be questioned. His explanation of all past ethical ideas as entirely determined by the economic status of groups enunciating them may be doubted. His contention that past history shows only the clashes of economic classes, following the Hegelian formula of thesis and antithesis, has not yet been demonstrated. His belief that the modern system of private enterprise leads indubitably to the impoverishment of the working class and to the rise of that class by revolution is an hypothesis which remains as yet unverified. As in the case of any prediction, only the future will give a final answer to this theory. Whatever are the respective merits

and demerits, from an ethical point of view, of the Hegelian conception of the state and the Marxian theory of the ascending star of the working class, the Hegelian view finds greater confirmation in past historical events. States constituted along Hegelian lines have arisen to claim and exact the allegiance of wide groups of individuals. On the other hand, the single, international class of workers has not yet appeared, or even given much indication of appearing, in the unmistakable form which Marx predicted. While this fact in no sense indicates that this group does not exist or will not in the future organize itself according to the Marxian pattern, these matters remain—for good or for evil—possibilities only. Mr. G. D. H. Cole,⁸ who is in some measure sympathetic to Marx's conceptions, points out that the class of small business men, property owners, tradesmen, etc., form in the twentieth century as real and coherent a group (the petty bourgeoisie) as either of the classes (the workers or the industrialists) which Marx believed were destined to swallow up all others. Any claim by Marxists that the small bourgeois class will either become members of the working class or enter into an allegiance with the industrialists remains a conjecture, admitting of no proof or disproof at the present time. Mr. Cole also suggests that the interests of financiers, merchants, and industrialists, while to some extent parallel, are at times quite divergent and conflicting. Similarly, it has not been shown that such professional groups, as lawyers, physicians, accountants, applied scientists, and teachers, have class interests which coincide at every point with those of workers or industrialists. The Marxist's contention that these groups fall into the industrialist class can neither be demonstrated or refuted. Lastly, the peasants and farmers are a continuous thorn in the side of the Marxian theory of the two main classes. Marx himself stressed the dependence of the workers of Paris, in their revolt of 1870, upon the co-operation, at least passive, of the peasants of France. The economic interests of farmers and

⁸ G. D. H. Cole, *What Marx Really Meant*, Knopf, 1934, pp. 98-142.

peasants do not seem to fall quite so readily into the framework of the class struggle as Marx believed. Indeed, quite apart from the interests of large industrialists, the peasants and farmers represent a group of individualists who frequently prove capable of resisting most stubbornly the wishes and power of urban workers. In general, the Marxian conception of the two conflicting classes, industrialists and workers, has not yet appeared historically with the same clarity and definiteness as that of the group in which Hegel centred ethical values; namely, the state.

A similar doubt remains concerning Marx's assertion that economic well-being for everyone would be the outcome of his revolutionary programme either before or after the triumph of the workers. Unless it can be shown that the system of unrestricted private enterprise operates only to impoverish the workers, the advisability of the abandonment of that system, either by legal means or by revolution, remains quite unproved. Even if the Marxists could show incontrovertibly that such impoverishment is in full swing, the desirability of the Marxian solution rather than, say, more governmental control, or even complete governmental ownership, of industry (state capitalism) would remain undemonstrated. The contention that political domination by the working class and the ownership of the instruments of production by that class would be a remedy for all economic evils is simply an untested hypothesis. There is no certainty that a society which adopted the Marxian thesis would not achieve the measure of economic well-being which Marx promises; there is equally little assurance that it would. Quite apart from all ethical considerations, the Marxian conception of history, with its account of past economic processes and its platform of political action, offers no guarantee that any of its ends—however laudable—would thereby be achieved.

Regarding the ethical implications of Marxism, the situation is quite different. Even on the assumption that a classless, communistic society, with economic well-being for all, would be the

outcome of the methods advocated by Marx, this very ethical ideal involves what Mr. T. V. Smith calls the "grossest immorality of means."⁹ In addition, the end itself seems to be of dubious ethical worth. In the name of the economic well-being of all, the revolutionary Marxist advocates the abandonment of orderly processes of government and the abjuration of the political rights of individuals which some nation-states have required centuries to win. These rights and the procedures of constitutional government upon which they rest are basic ingredients of a life of well-being and well-doing of groups and individuals.¹⁰ Every argument which the Marxists bring forward to justify the abandonment of basic political rights and orderly processes of government may be brought forward by any advocate of political tyranny. In neither case does the end justify the means. Any nation which purchased economic welfare for its citizens by sacrificing fundamental political rights and forms of government would do so only by destroying a major basis of all individual and group ethical living. Nothing in the way of subsequent economic benefits to the citizens could offset the resulting spiritual impoverishment.

As undemonstrated as Marx's economic theories are, they could not be criticized on ethical grounds if he had stated them entirely in terms of economic necessity. If he had held that all private ethical values are abnormal outgrowths of a political and economic system which simply fails to feed and clothe people, and had defended a change entirely on the ground that persons must be fed and clothed, the student of ethics would have nothing to say pending a proof or disproof of his contentions. More specifically, if the Marxist merely means that an individual worker ought to throw his lot in with his fellows and join a union, even at the risk of an immediate, material loss to himself, because in so doing he furthers in the long run his own material advantage (and that of his fellows), no disagreement

⁹ T. V. Smith, *Promise of American Politics*, Chicago, 1936, p. 160.

¹⁰ Cf. below, pp. 363-75.

would be possible. One of the requirements of just relations in modern industry is the right of workers to combine in unions.¹¹ When, however, the Marxist claims that true individuality is realized only in and through the Marxian programme, when he holds that an individual can achieve ethical, no less than bodily, well-being only in and through an allegiance to the one international group of workers, he is formulating a decidedly one-sided conception of ethical life. More specifically, in contending that a worker discovers in his relation to his fellow-workers a structure of values "which define [his] self," or that the worker's "whole personality is fulfilled" by throwing his lot in with his economic class, the Marxist states a very narrow theory of ethical values. The worker is not told to take the prudent and wise step of joining a union merely in order to better his own economic lot and that of his fellows. He is informed that his very inner life—family affection, friendship, egoism, and individual benevolence—his whole personality becomes constituted by his relation to the workers' union. While the machine has put human workers in a straitjacket of pretty bad public, ethical values prior to the revolution, the communist plans to clamp upon them an equally rigid, assumedly better, but nonetheless public, set of values afterwards. Individualism, allegedly destroyed by the machine before the revolution, is to remain a corpse by means of communistic education afterwards. At both times, the group is the sole locus of ethical values.

ETHICS AND SOCIOLOGY: AUGUSTE COMTE

In transferring the centre of gravity of ethics from the individual to a group, Hegel and Marx proceeded upon one common assumption. They believed that the individual should subordinate himself to a group with political and economic power. Hegel centred political power in the nation-state, while Marx would centre it, at least for a time, in the working class. In contrast to this emphasis upon politically and economically

¹¹ Cf. below, pp. 327-31.

powerful groups, certain defenders of social values have turned to two different, though related, problems: (1) The study of the origins, structure, and functions of a group variously called Society, the Great Society, the Public, or the Social Organism; (2) practical efforts to improve the conditions of society. In the first task, the proponent of group values is a theoretical sociologist; in the second, he is a social worker, or, as we shall call him, a group meliorist. We shall consider briefly the views of a typical representative of each of these tendencies: Auguste Comte, one of the founders of theoretical sociology, and Jane Addams, a proponent of group meliorism in practice.

Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was born in Montpellier, France, of a Catholic Royalist family. Early in life he broke with his former religious and political views. In 1814 he entered the *Ecole Polytechnique* in Paris and began the study of the natural sciences and mathematics. While reading the works of the naturalists Lamarck, Cuvier, and Gall, and the mathematical successors of Descartes, he turned his attention to eighteenth-century political and ethical theory, particularly the works of Montesquieu, Condorcet, Adam Smith, and Hume. In 1818 he became associated with Saint-Simon, from whom he got his belief that a science of social and political life is possible, but the two men soon quarrelled and permanently separated. Shortly after beginning a course of lectures on his maturing philosophy, Comte had a fit of melancholia and attempted to drown himself in the Seine. For the next twenty years he lived in poverty, being for a time a public-school examiner of prospective pupils, and at other times living upon subscriptions raised by various European intellectuals, including John Stuart Mill. Meanwhile he published his *Positive Philosophy*, in several volumes, the product of twelve years of arduous labour. In 1842 he separated from his wife. In 1845 he made the acquaintance of Madame Clotilde de Vaux, who seems to have given a decidedly religious and mystical turn to his thought. After her death he worked out his *System of Posi-*

rive Polity, which culminated in his famous religion of humanity, with mankind itself as the object of worship. Comte laid much stress upon external, social rituals in the new religion, and believed in a kind of divinity inherent in human nature, particularly in women. Because of his relative indifference to political forms and his conviction that a benevolent dictatorship of the most capable business and professional leaders is most conducive to the spiritual development of the Social Organism, Comte welcomed the *coup d'état* in 1852 of the reactionary Louis Napoleon.

COMTE'S SCIENCE OF THE SOCIAL ORGANISM

According to the very nature of the human intellect, every branch of our knowledge must necessarily pass successively in the case of its progressive development through three different theoretical states: The theological or fictitious state, the metaphysical or abstract state, finally the scientific or positive state.¹²

In the first of these stages the external world of nature is considered to have been created by the will of God. This view Comte calls fetishism or theology. In the second, men emancipate themselves from the primitive theological view, and seek abstract "metaphysical" causes of things. With the dawn of science even this view is abandoned, and the truly scientific thinkers merely describe the events of nature as they are observed to occur; the idea of law replaces that of cause. This scientific attitude Comte calls positivism, meaning thereby that it yields only observable and verifiable truths.

The scientific or positivistic method, Comte believed, had spread gradually to include mathematics, astronomy, terrestrial physics, chemistry, physiology, and biology. In each of these realms it had already achieved widespread success. There remained only the problem of applying the same methods to the study of human society, and the result would be the science

¹² Lévy-Bruhl, *The Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, translated by Beaumont-Klein, Sonnenschein, 1903, p. 36 (quoting Comte).

of sociology. Ethics, while not a science, had the important function of spreading a knowledge of the scientific method, and teaching human beings to guide their lives in accordance with the laws of sociology.

Comte banished from his conception of society the spectre of the isolated, self-sufficient individual.

Man indeed, as an individual, cannot properly be said to exist, except in the exaggerated abstractions of modern metaphysicians. Existence in the true sense can only be predicated of humanity.¹³

If individuals do not have true existence, the nature of humanity becomes considerably simplified. There is one great vital social organism: Mankind. Studied in terms of its organization, it is the concern of social statics. Order is the law of its nature, a complete solidarity of each of its parts with the whole. Mankind is not degraded to the organic level of animals by this description; on the contrary, both the inorganic and the organic realms of nature are "elevated by connection with humanity." As a part of the public worship of humanity in the new positivistic society, there are to be festivals explaining and celebrating social order and solidarity as the principles of the humanity of which individuals are parts. The physical independence of individual human beings, far from proving their "organic" separation from humanity, demonstrates the reverse. Within the social organism there are specialized unions and functions of the parts. The relations of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and brother, are all intrinsic features of humanity, and are also to be explained and celebrated by festivals in the religion of humanity. Humanity includes the dead and the unborn. Just as Edmund Burke adopted the theory of an actual historical contract, by means of which individuals entered society, and interpreted it as including an agreement between the dead, the living, and the unborn, so Comte transforms the idea of an existing humanity into a mys-

¹³ Lévy-Bruhl, *op. cit.*, p. 354, quoting Comte.

tical conception including the unborn and especially the dead. "Humanity is made up more of the dead than the living."

The social organism is studied, likewise, in terms of its continuous historical development, as the concern of social dynamics. So viewed, humanity is not immutable but ever-changing and subject to destruction. Accordingly the positive philosopher and sociologist seek to conserve it and promote its growth by the spread of social modes of behaviour. *Progress* is the fundamental principle of society viewed dynamically. Just as the preservation of social *order* is to be left in the hands of the politician, so the social *progress* is to be fostered by what Comte called the "spiritual power." The temporal, political power corresponds in the social organism to the nutritive functions of the body of an individual; the spiritual power, on the other hand, is threefold, corresponding to the cerebral functions of the brain, broadly construed as thinking, sympathetic feeling, and activity. In the social organism, rational thinking and guiding lie in the hands of the philosopher-priests; sympathetic feelings are found in the women; and all practical activity is in the hands of the working class, which Comte equated with the people. These three groups form the spiritual power, and they should not usurp the functions of political ruling: they should merely see to it that the politicians rule in the interest of everyone. This assurance can be achieved only by a spiritual, social programme with three component parts: The philosophers supply the logical coherence and guidance, but never enter politics; the working class supplies the practical energy and force; the women supply the finest and most altruistic inspiration. The combined influence of these three groups, acting in harmony, constitutes the spiritual, social power which engenders an attitude of unwavering altruism on the part of the political dictator. Each citizen becomes a public functionary. The conception of individual rights is banished from society as contrary to positivistic morality, and is everywhere replaced by the idea of duty: "Man's only right is to do his duty." The

united efforts of the philosophers and the workers lead to the creation and effective use of an active public opinion. The influence of public opinion and the spread of the feeling of sympathy, nurtured chiefly by the women, bring about the social regeneration and organization of society. This reform will spread beyond national frontiers, and Comte envisaged the acceptance of "social" principles first by "the Great Western Republic, formed of the five advanced nations, the French, Italian, Spanish, British, and German, which since the time of Charlemagne, have always constituted a political whole." Eventually humanity replaces the nation-states.

THE ETHICS OF THE SOCIAL ORGANISM

The ethical problem for each individual consists in the complete substitution of duties for rights, the complete subordination of personal to social considerations. Social sympathy replaces selfish egoism. Historically, personal morality has passed through three stages: The personal, the domestic, and the social. In the first, there was a preponderance of the feeling of self-love. Comte admitted that this feeling still has an intensity which is lacking in social sympathy, and deplored the fact that individuals are still unaware of their deeper ties with humanity; unfortunately self-love retains, even in developed individuals, much of its original strength and definiteness. The social affections are, however, capable of being made dominant through the channel of domestic affection, which also represents the second historical stage of morality. No one incapable of a deep love for his wife and children will be able to achieve a true love of humanity. Training in domestic love begins in childhood with the inculcation of love of parents; brotherly love comes next, the implanting of the seeds of a feeling of social solidarity; next comes the love between husband and wife, which has such depth that a special meaning of the term "love" is reserved for it. Lastly comes parental love, binding men to the future through their children, in the same way

that filial love binds them to the past. By means of these various types of affection, a person can reach the highest moral stage, which appears last historically; namely, a love of humanity.

The essence of all moral development is the complete transformation of personal virtues to a social basis. Personal welfare should be ignored even in relation to such virtues as chastity and temperance.

[The positivist] will not of course be blind to [the] personal advantages [of these virtues]; but this is an aspect on which he will not dwell too much, for fear of concentrating attention on self-interest. . . . Even in the commonest of personal virtues, cleanliness, [the alteration from the personal to the social point of view] may be made with advantage. A simple sanitary regulation is thus ennobled by knowing that the object of it is to make each of us more fit for the service of others. In this way, and in no other, can moral education assume its true character at the very outset. *We shall become habituated to the feeling of subordination to humanity, even in our smallest actions.*¹⁴

Once more all personal ethics is subordinated to the concerns of a group, this time not the nation-state or the working class, but the great social organism, humanity, in which we live and move and have our being. In the words of C. H. Cooley, a modern sociologist:

Human life is thus all one growing whole, unified by ceaseless currents of interaction, but at the same time differentiated into those diverse forms of energy which we see as men, factions, tendencies, doctrines, and institutions. . . . Society is an organism. . . .

Sound theory calls for a type of organism intermediate between the individual or the family and the world-whole which we hope to see arise. . . .

Valuation is a social process. . . . Intelligence is a phase of social process. . . . I think those nations were not wholly wrong who,

¹⁴ Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism*, Bridges' translation, Trübner, 1865, p. 104 (italics ours).

rejecting the extreme doctrines of utilitarian individualism, have maintained the idea and feeling of a transcendent collective reality.¹⁵

LIMITATIONS IN THE ETHICS OF SOCIETY

Comte's theory of the social organism, as well as this more recent variant of that doctrine, represents a decidedly distorted picture of the nature of the relations between human persons. Individuals would seem to be intrinsically different from a kind of social energy. Genuine evaluation and intelligence would always seem to be the possession of individuals, to whatever extent conditions of group life may influence the use of these abilities. In general, every description of human beings as segments of a "world-whole," a "transcendent collective reality," or an "organism" ignores many aspects of human personality: Desires, emotions, habits, and thoughts, and indeed the entire "inner life." While conduct is often directed towards groups of persons, it proceeds in every case from an individual who exists as truly as, and probably more truly than, the group in question. Dr. Stockmann serving his community is quite as existent as the group he serves and in some ways considerably more real. In many cases conduct is not even pointed towards groups at all, but towards other individuals who can each be considered to be merely a segment of a group only by ignoring almost every feature of the given situation. Elizabeth strolling with Darcy, Emerson writing to a friend, or Hannah making a little coat for Samuel, can be described as a phase of group life only by forfeiting much insight into the personal relations involved. Occasionally conduct even concerns only one person, though these cases are rare. No human conduct can be considered to consist exclusively of the "segmental behaviour" of a social organism. While individuals have important ties with each other, the inner life which is peculiar to each is more than a form of "social energy." Indeed, the expression "social organism" is rather vague and is a hindrance to a true under-

¹⁵ C. H. Cooley, *Social Process*, Scribner's, 1918, pp. 3-4, 256, 418. By permission of the publishers.

standing of the nature of personal and group conduct. This expression rests upon a piece of dubious analogical thinking, which keeps one eye upon genuine, living organisms, such as plants, animals, and human bodies, and the other upon the public aspect of some ethical conduct. The fact that group life is *like* the organic processes of an animal body is no evidence that there is any such thing as a social organism.

Quite apart from the theory of organic society, Comte's sociological ethics is a one-sided conception of ethical values. It labels as selfish every tendency to value personal life for its own sake. The basis of Comte's ethical programme is a thorough-going substitution of duties for rights, the subordination of personal to social considerations. Every personal virtue must be placed upon a social basis. In Comte's words, a person ought to be interested in personal cleanliness and a sanitary way of living not because these habits are valuable in themselves, and even less because they are valuable to the person practising them, but solely because of their social effects. Any individual who insists that he likes to be clean and takes a bath for this reason is a selfish egoist. If he performs too many acts with such motives he is anti-social, and lacks a love of humanity. Similarly, any person who values a temperate manner of living because of greater personal pleasure or power or health, and is not primarily concerned with the social effects of his temperance, is following a most primitive ethical code. Any maiden who finds a personal, selfish value in chastity is practising this admitted virtue in an unworthy, anti-social fashion. In general we must, in Comte's opinion, subordinate ourselves and our conduct to humanity "even in our smallest actions."

This teaching represents an unwarranted exaggeration of an important ethical idea. A person who seeks to live wisely and well must in fact realize that in many ways he should subordinate personal considerations to the wider welfare of groups of individuals. The ethics of wisdom in conduct has no quarrel with a belief in the need for much more altruism in human

lives than is generally found. The exaggerated nature of Comte's doctrine reveals itself, however, in the corollary which he attaches to his view. Not only is social sympathy good, but every tendency to value individuals for their own sakes is egoistic and bad. Not merely some but all personal considerations ought to be subordinated to the needs of group life; not merely some but all rights should yield to duties. This type of attempt to place all personal ethics upon a social basis is out of harmony with the wise way which seeks to give fair recognition to the spheres of personal and social values and to promote both of them for their own sakes. Comte forgot that not every feeling and deed which is dominated by a private, personal motive is for this reason selfish. He overlooked the fact that even primitive peoples were not particularly egoistic and selfish in their mode of living. In civilized life there is a whole class of private deeds in which a person may behave either selfishly or unselfishly, but in which his deeds are not primarily social or anti-social. Many problems of private, personal living are important in their own right, as well as because of any repercussions they may have upon wider public groups or upon humanity as a whole. A strong conviction of the importance of personal ethical values is not incompatible with an equally sincere appreciation of the importance of social sympathy.

ETHICS AND GROUP MELIORISM: JANE ADDAMS

At the same time that Comte was making a plea for the regeneration of the hearts of men by the passage from selfish egoism to social sympathy, many thoughtful persons in various European countries were becoming increasingly aware of the need for the betterment of the living conditions of the majority of their fellow citizens. Various legislative measures in the early part of the nineteenth century concerning labouring conditions, child labour, and the like, represented attempts to ameliorate the lives of the poor. Since Comte's day there has been an increasing concern for individuals who are unemployed, sick, des-

titude, in legal difficulties, or suffering in various other ways as a result of the conditions of modern industrial life. Unemployment insurance, sickness and old-age insurance, child labour laws, minimum wage and maximum hours laws, laws guaranteeing certain rights for working groups, all bear witness to the attempts to cope with the hardships of unfortunate citizens by legislative methods. The activities of public charities, and the organization of various types of civic and social agencies, represent a persistent attempt to deal with some of the same problems in extra-political ways. These activities in their broadest scope are forms of group meliorism or betterment.

In our modern world, no serious student of ethics can afford to ignore—or, even worse, to belittle—efforts to better the lot of unfortunate groups of persons. The student's attention is called again to two of the main theses of this study: First, ethics is not primarily a theoretical study, but a study of situations in individual and group life demanding the habitual application to conduct of the products of knowing, discriminating, and evaluating. Secondly, ethics is not a study of the good, but of the various goods bound up in the lives of persons and groups. If we remember these two theses, we will realize that an important proponent of one phase of wisdom in conduct is the group meliorist, Jane Addams.

Jane Addams (1860-1934) was born at Cedarville, Illinois. While studying at a girls' seminary she became aware of the gulf between the lives of families of better social position and greater economic resources, and those of the larger number of struggling lower-class families. After studying economic and sociological problems and conditions in Europe and America, she founded in 1889 the social settlement in Chicago known as Hull House. Her work was highly successful, and attracted world-wide interest. She combined to a remarkable degree the rare executive skill requisite to the successful management of such an undertaking, and a sympathetic understanding of the many unfortunate immigrants and other working-class persons

(particularly young people) whom she was trying to help. She took part in the municipal government of Chicago, and was active in the Women's International League for Peace. In 1902, she published a book, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, which represents an attempt to relate ethics to the various practical problems of group meliorism. Among her other books are *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1907); *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (1912); and *Twenty Years of Hull House* (1910).

Miss Addams began her study of ethics by a contrast between the conceptions of individual and social morality:

Certain forms of personal righteousness have become to a majority of the community almost automatic. It is as easy for most of us to keep from stealing our dinners as it is to digest them, and there is quite as much voluntary morality involved in [the] one process as in the other. To steal would be for us to fall sadly below the standard of habit and expectation which makes virtue easy. In the same way we have been carefully reared to a sense of family obligation, to be kindly and considerate to the members of our own households, and to feel responsible for their well-being. As the rules of conduct have become established in regard to our self-development and our families, so they have been in regard to limited circles of friends. If the fulfilment of these claims were all that a righteous life required, the hunger and thirst would be stilled for many good men and women, and the clue of right living would lie most easily in their hands. . . . To attain individual morality in an age demanding social morality, to pride one's self on the results of personal effort when the time demands social adjustment, is utterly to fail to apprehend the situation. . . .

The one test which the most authoritative and dramatic portrayal of the Day of Judgment offers, is the social test. The stern questions are not in regard to personal and family relations, but did ye visit the poor, the criminal, the sick, and did ye feed the hungry.¹⁶

Miss Addams does not content herself, however, with a broad, theoretical appeal for a love of humanity or social sympathy. She tells us specifically that a conception of "duties

¹⁶ Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, Macmillan, 1907, pp. 1-3. By permission of the publishers.

towards humanity," while an advance over the conceptions of individual virtues, and the eighteenth-century "rights of man," did not go far enough.

It remained for the moralist of this generation to dissolve "humanity" into its component parts of men, women, and children and to serve their humblest needs with an enthusiasm which . . . can be sustained only by daily knowledge and constant companionship.¹⁷

Miss Addams turned her attention to a wide variety of social matters: the administration of public charities, the problems of young people in cities, industrial amelioration, municipal corruption, flaws in modern education, the social status of household servants, the search for international good will, and many other important questions. Throughout her treatment of group problems there runs one major thread: Individual ethics has developed a set of virtues which refers to the past rather than to the present. This set of virtues must be supplemented, and in some connections replaced, by a new set of social virtues growing out of, and related to the needs of, our times. The chief problem of ethics "which may appear as a choice between virtue and vice is really but a choice between virtue and virtue."¹⁸

The older, more individualistic conceptions of virtues referred primarily to times in which an individual had a chance to achieve by his own efforts and virtues a place of economic independence and social rank. Typical virtues of this sort were cleanliness, decency of living, thrift, temperance, and steadiness of purpose. By means of these qualities, members of an older generation were able to cope successfully with most problems of personal living and business activity. Naturally, these people find it difficult to recognize any other kinds of excellence. They may be quite incapable of appreciating many of the problems confronting poor labourers or their families and children, or of

¹⁷ Jane Addams, *Newer Ideals of Peace*, Macmillan, 1911, pp. 29-30.

¹⁸ Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, Macmillan, 1907, p. 172.

suggesting ways to overcome their distress. The older ethical code frequently stressed the quite visible value of personal benevolence, and as an illustration of this virtue Miss Addams mentions the instance of a Chicago business man who built a splendid village for his workers to live in. He became so conscious of his own benevolence that he could not realize that his employés had any other point of view, and was incensed at them for striking, for other reasons, in the face of his kindness.

Set over against the virtues of the older, individualistic code, Miss Addams mentions several examples of moral excellence based upon new social conditions; for example: "The injury of one is the concern of all." She found this virtue illustrated in the unusual degree of self-sacrifice which people in the tenement districts of Chicago habitually showed towards people in distress, even towards comparative strangers. If a neighbour was in need, these people gave everything they had in the way of money, food, clothes, a place to sleep, medical attention, etc. They were totally incapable of understanding the kind of charity which was willing to contribute only a limited portion of the available funds, clothes, shoes, and other goods. In the face of severe want, the advocacy of industry and thrift seemed to them meaningless. Brotherhood and solidarity were far more solid and real virtues. The same virtues appeared also among labourers—the realization that each person's interest was bound up with that of all of the others. Miss Addams tells us that the same industrialist who was so pleased with his own nobility in building the village for his workers was utterly incapable of appreciating the quite different kind of nobility involved in the sympathetic strike of one group of workers for the sake of all. The newer, more social conceptions of wise conduct stress the subordination of the individual and smaller groups to the interests of the whole working class.

Like Tolstoi, Miss Addams believes that poor immigrant families, wayward school boys, dissatisfied young women, poverty-stricken tenement dwellers, and groups of working men,

are the bearers of the germs of a new social morality directed towards the remedy of the many ills which afflict large numbers of people. She is convinced that the task of sociology and ethics is to understand the problems of these many needy people, and actively to better their lot by both political and extra-political means. Some reforms come about, she holds, by the spectacle of effective, individual philanthropic effort; witness the way in which kindergartens were introduced. This procedure is haphazard, however, and should be replaced in the cases of most social evils by active, political planning. In general, moral progress can be made only when the "narrower code of family relations" is replaced by the "wider code of social relations," only when we realize that "the sacredness and beauty of family life do not consist in the processes of the separate preparation of food, but in sharing the corporate life of the community, and in making the family the unit of that life."¹⁹ Administrators of public charities must abandon their individualistic sense of being good *to* people, and more humbly attempt to be good *with* them—consulting them and understanding their point of view. The same change of attitude is necessary on the part of public-school educators, political reformers, and factory managers.

THE LIMITED PERSPECTIVE OF GROUP MELIORISM

In addition to the many specific ways in which Miss Addams put into practice the ethical views which she held, her teachings themselves form an important contribution to the ethics of wise living. She sought the expansion of ethical ideas to include not merely "right" rules for private conduct, but also the many specific situations in which groups of unfortunate persons find themselves forced to live. She emphasized the need of the development of individual citizens possessing the kind of ethical excellence which is concerned with feeding the hungry, aiding the poor, helping the criminal, and improving the lot of indus-

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

trial workers. She clearly enunciated the theory of the relativity of virtues to particular situations. Above all, she stressed the essential interconnection of individual and community virtue. Since each of these ideas is intrinsic to the ethics of wisdom in conduct, Miss Addams may be said to be an important proponent of this ethical theory.

In spite of this large measure of agreement between the views of this book and the teachings of Miss Addams, the student must be cautioned that in one important regard the two conceptions are different. Miss Addams forgot that the same kind of ethical point of view which she so adequately defended in regard to group living must also be formulated with reference to the problems of personal life. There are many problems of private personal living, a conscientious solution of which is neither automatic nor trivial nor necessarily selfish. Childhood play, education, marriage, friendship, and the like, involve ethical challenges which require the most careful discrimination, and much of the time the most unselfish attention. Many problems of personal living are quite important in their own right, and a due respect for them is neither selfish nor aristocratic. There are many persons in various communities facing in their lives the kinds of evils against which Miss Addams fought with hand and pen. There are, however, also many individuals who fortunately do not fall into this suffering group. While these latter individuals must become aware of their obligation to take some part in the alleviation of the distress of the poor, not every privileged person can or ought to become an active group meliorist. In other words, in modern communities many persons will continue to face a host of challenging problems other than those with which the humanitarian is specifically concerned. Therefore, while ethics must concern itself with the situations in which unfortunate citizens find themselves, it must likewise concern itself with other problems faced by persons whose lives are relatively free from hardships and evils. These latter problems in personal life, some of which

involve no prevention, remedy, or alleviation, must be considered by the student of wise conduct, no less than the issues of social welfare.

In other words, wise living involves not only a concern for group meliorism, but likewise an equally persistent search for the path to individual well-being and well-doing in private life. A selfish interest in one's self and private circle of friends must be replaced not only by a sense of the needs of the indigent, the unemployed, and the sick, but also by a deeper, more unselfish conception of the obligations of friendship and family life. The student of ethics will refuse to elevate either personal or group problems to a position of unique eminence, in his search for the wise way.

WISDOM AND PRUDENCE: A CAUTION

In completing a consideration of the nature of group meliorism, a distinction mentioned in the first chapter must now be recalled. Activities of individuals and groups directed primarily towards prevention and remedy of evils were called negative, in opposition to a search for goals of positive value. While competent group meliorists well realize the desirability of a search for positive goals, their more specific concern is with problems of prevention and remedy: Poverty, sickness, unemployment, and the like. The need for industrial amelioration implies that labourers lack a living wage, decent working conditions, a steady position, etc. To these negative problems the social worker is forced to give his major attention. Over and beyond the more immediate aims of group meliorism lie the positive features of living which suffering individuals and groups can begin to cultivate only when the tasks of social betterment have been in some measure completed. The student of ethics must therefore remember the limited scope of all preventive or corrective activity, pointing at best towards prudent conduct—a satisfactory solution of negative problems. Alone it can never show the wise way to the most nearly complete life

either for a person or a group. An individual might prudently sleep his life away under a banana tree; he might remain free from poverty, disease, and all other troubles; he might remain a non-liar, a non-thief, a non-murderer, etc., but he would hardly be wise. A society which achieved the absence of unemployment, crime, poverty, insanity, political corruption, and industrial strife—or, in a word, “security” for all—would be a paradise from the point of view of prudent living; it is questionable whether merely the lack of all of these admitted evils would mean that even its “corporate” life was a wise and full one.

CHAPTER VI

ETHICS IS THE STUDY OF WISDOM IN CONDUCT

A. Confucius

AT the beginning of our investigation we pointed out that ethics is the study of wisdom in the conduct of life. Later we discussed four other conceptions: (1) Ethics is the study of right rules; (2) it is the study of the good; (3) inward spirituality is the sole locus of ethical values; (4) group life is the sole locus of those values. Each of these four views was found to involve either a distortion of the problems of human living or a misplaced emphasis upon certain phases of those problems. We turn now to the more constructive task of examining the general meaning of wisdom in the conduct of life, appealing first to the teachings of three great men, Confucius, Socrates, and Aristotle, and turning then to a systematic description of the idea. Later chapters will then be concerned with the application of the idea of wisdom in conduct to particular ethical situations.

One great pioneer in the search for wise living was the Chinese, Confucius (551-479 B.C.). He was born in the city of Ch'ü in the state of Lu (today the province of Shantung). Named Ch'iu because of his large forehead, he was also known as Chung Ni, and later K'ung-fu-tzū, or K'ung the philosopher. He married early. The major part of his life was occupied in teaching young men the wisdom of the past, editing ancient classics, and actively participating in politics and diplomacy. It is possible that he met Lao-tse in 518 B.C. After a brief period of exile in company with the duke of his state, he returned to Lu and held successively the positions of magistrate at Chung Tu, minister of crime, and possibly prime minister. During

these years the most remarkable reforms were enacted in civil and criminal law, and the state experienced a period of unusually honest and just government. In 496, the duke, tiring of a strict mode of living, was won to a life of pleasure by a present of singing girls and fine horses, and the state fell into evil days. All of Confucius' reforms turned out to be in vain, and he was forced to go into exile for thirteen years. His last years were saddened by the deaths of his wife, his son, and his favourite disciple, Yen Hui. Among the important writings associated with Confucianism are the classics, ancient even in Confucius' time, *The Book of History*, *The Odes*, and *The Book of Ceremonies*; and also the writings of Confucius' followers, *The Great Learning* by Tsêng Tzû, *The Doctrine of the Mean* by Tzû Ssü, the works of Mencius, and, finally, *The Analects or Sayings of Confucius*.

THE CONFUCIAN LOVER OF LEARNING

In common parlance, learning is associated with learnedness or erudition. Classical scholars, mathematicians, philosophers, and scientists have a kind of "learning" which is quite beyond the reach of most people. These erudite men have acquired deep insight into some particular range of objects and things. If a man of this sort is learned enough, we may wink at his lapses from usual conduct by calling him a genius, unfortunately a bit unstable in spite of, or even because of, his range of knowledge. The garb of the scholar is a favourite guise of Mephistopheles. This conception of learning is marked by a wide divorce between theoretical and practical wisdom. From this point of view, a man's learning is considered as something entirely apart from his conduct and attitudes outside his specialty.

Confucius looked upon learning in an entirely different way. While not ruling out learnedness or erudition as an aspect of a man's learning, Confucius believed that true learning includes a great deal more than this. A learned man must be both wise

and virtuous. Far from learning's exempting a man from the usual responsibilities in matters of personal and political living, genuine learning entails wide and deep responsibilities in every matter of conduct. Precisely because a man has some measure of learning, he is to be expected to live more wisely than other people. The learned man or sage is one who has occupied himself incessantly with the search for knowledge and insight and has applied the fruits of his investigations to everyday affairs in personal and political life. The true sage is skilled in the art of living; the virtuous man is steeped in a knowledge of the classics. The two men are essentially one. Study leads to conduct, and conduct to further study. Learning is wisdom manifesting itself in conduct.

Did Confucius claim to be a learned man himself? To understand why he did not, we must appreciate the difference between being a lover of something, and possessing or achieving the thing loved. A lover of beauty is not necessarily beautiful. A lover of farming may not be a farmer. A lover of violin music is not necessarily a Fritz Kreisler or even a bungling amateur violinist. Similarly, a lover of learning may be in no sense a person who possesses learning. Confucius distinguished carefully between the virtuous sage and the student who aims at wisdom. The latter is merely a lover of learning, and Confucius himself made no pretence of being any more than this.

As to being a sage, or a man of virtue, how dare I presume to such a claim? But as to striving thereafter unwearingly, and teaching others therein without flagging—that can be said of me, and that is all.¹

The lover of learning is, above all, humble. Convinced of his own relative lack of virtue and knowledge, he cannot pretend to exemplify in his own person the values which he seeks. He has some conception of what virtuous character and conduct are like, but his most cherished convictions are open-minded

¹ *The Analects of Confucius*, Soothill's translation, Oxford, 1937, Book VII, Chap. XXXIII.

and tentative. For example, a love of kindness is good; but a love of kindness without a desire to continue learning passes over into foolishness. Similarly, a love of theoretical knowledge is good; but such a love untempered by a desire to remain a learner passes over into loose speculation. Again, a love of straightforward speech is good; but an unrestrained practice of this virtue may become harmful candour. Again, a love of bravery and daring is good; but daring unguided by a love of learning passes over into mere turbulence. Finally, and most important of all, even a love of strength of character can lead to sheer intractability if not accompanied by a willingness and desire to learn.² The mere possession of these various virtues is no assurance that the conduct embodying or expressing them will be wise.

A willingness to learn implies a search for knowledge, but not merely a desire to collect facts. Tzŭ, a Confucian, once said, "I detest those who count prying out information as wisdom. . . ." Or, as Confucius himself said:

A man may be able to recite the three hundred Odes, but if, when given a post in the administration, he proves to be without practical ability, or when sent anywhere on a mission he is unable of himself to answer a question, although his knowledge is extensive, of what use is it? ³

In addition, the lover of learning must possess imagination, the ability to notice likenesses.

The Master, addressing Tzŭ Kung, said, "Which is the superior, you or Hui?" "How dare I look at Hui?" he answered: "Hui hears one point and from it apprehends the whole ten. I hear one point and apprehend a second therefrom." The Master said, "You are not equal to him, I grant you, you are not equal to him." ⁴

Also, the lover of learning will apply his knowledge to conduct, including holding political office.

² The above passage is a paraphrase of Book XVII, Chap. VIII.

³ *Op. cit.*, Book VIII, Chap. V.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, Book V, Chap. VIII.

Tzū Hsia said: "As the various craftsmen dwell in their workshops that they may do their work effectively, so the Wise Man applies himself to study that he may carry his wisdom to perfection. . . .

"The occupant of office when his duties are finished should betake himself to study; and the student when his studies are finished should betake himself to office." ⁵

Finally, the application of his knowledge in conduct must not be intermittent or occasional, but habitual, over his whole life.

If a man intellectually realizes a given principle, but if his moral character does not enable him to live up to it, even though he has reached it, he will decline from it. . . .

If a well-bred man be three years without exercising his manners, his manners will certainly degenerate; and if for three years he make no use of music, his music will certainly go to ruin.⁶

The wise man "will not belie the professions of his whole life."

THE ETHICS OF SITUATIONS

Confucius was quite specific in condemning an undue emphasis upon "right" principles in matters of conduct. One day a recluse sneeringly accused him of flippancy in his teaching, a mere "perching here and perching there." To this charge the Master replied: "I should hate to be obstinately unmoveable." Strength of character must be tempered by a love of learning, or a stoical intractability and insensibility results. The tendency to sacrifice everything to a principle produces fine results at times, but it has been known also to lead to fanaticism. The willingness of the learner to admit that his own particular set of principles does not represent a kind of final wisdom for dealing with any and every case of conduct is not evidence that he lacks principles entirely. A bird may abandon one nest, not to perch unstably here and there, but to build another nest. It is probably inevitable that few of his feathered

⁵ *Op. cit.*, Book XIX, Chap. VII, XIII.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, Book XV, Chap. XXXII; Book XVII, Chap. XXI.

friends will be able to distinguish between the two kinds of shifting. When Confucius says, "With me there is no inflexible 'thou shalt' or 'thou shalt not,'" whatever he may mean to a Confucian learner and other students of wise conduct, it is perhaps inevitable that Jahveh should frown, and also that Satan should chuckle. The absence of rigid rules of "right" conduct is, indeed, frequently evidence that a man has no rules at all and is searching for none. Aristippus, as well as the defenders of authoritarian morality, would be quite sure that *he* understood what Confucius meant. It is quite difficult to become a learner if you already know the answers to problems of conduct. As Confucius says, "It is only the wisest and the stupidest who never change."

It would be a mistake, therefore, to attempt to discover in any one of Confucius' sayings a clue to all problems of personal and political living. Nothing could be farther from the spirit of his ethics than an attempt to classify his ideas in such a way that a single set of answers for all situations and circumstances results. In one place he tells us that he has "one principle connecting all," but in another he holds that while "a man can enlarge his principles, it is not the principles that enlarge the man." Perhaps the closest that he came to formulating a single criterion of wise living was when he was asked by Tsū:

"Is there any one word . . . which could be adopted as a life-long rule of conduct?" The master replied: "Is not sympathy [or fellow feeling] the word? Do not do to others what you would not like yourself."⁷

By westerners this idea has been elevated into a kind of rule of thumb for conduct, differing from the Christian Golden Rule in its negative manner of expression. In fact it is a mistake to interpret the saying in this fashion. For the student who aims at wisdom, no one rule adequately represents the outcome of his discrimination and evaluation. However valuable

⁷ *Op. cit.*, Book XV, Chap. XXIII.

a general rule may be as a kind of minimum requirement of wise living, each particular problem of conduct requires a host of additional considerations. Indeed, many of the problems of family and political life, friendship, and self-development, education and taste—every one of which was for Confucius a problem of conduct—demand for their solutions a much more complex process of learning and practice than the application of any one formula. Obligations between parents and children, the study of music, the formulation and execution of laws, cannot be treated as the outcome of any single rule.

THE LEARNER AND THE MIDDLE WAY

For many problems of individual living, Confucius prescribes the middle way as the wise way. "How perfect is the virtue that accords with the Golden Mean. And long has it been rare among the people." Anticipating Aristotle's theory, Confucius meant that in most situations the learner should seek to discover a type of conduct midway between the over-indulgence or over-expression of an action, passion, or attitude, and a corresponding deficiency of indulgence or expression; "to go beyond the mark is as bad as to come short." To overdo a thing is as bad as to underdo it. The passions of kindness, frankness, bravery, love, and anger may be expressed too strongly or too often; on the other hand, they may be expressed too weakly and too infrequently. A person may strive too hard, or not hard enough. Like Aristotle, Confucius held that the correct or middle way for one person is apt to be quite different from the middle way for another. "Ch'iu lags behind," he said, "so I urged him forward; but Yu has energy for two men, so I held him back." The task of the Confucian learner is to discover which of his own propensities are over-strong and which too weak, and to avoid the two types of extremes. In general, Confucius held—and he apparently left room for exceptions—that young men tend by nature to go to extremes in sensual passions and appetites. Therefore when a man is young

he should beware especially of lust. In the prime of life, however, men tend by nature to go to extremes in hostility and anger. Consequently when a man reaches his full growth he should beware of strife. In declining years men tend by nature to become more grasping and avaricious. For this reason, in old age a man should beware of greed. Even such major virtues as knowledge, purity, courage, and skill, must be "refined with the arts of courtesy and harmony" in order to become a part of a life of the Mean.

The middle way must also be sought in the experience of such natural appetites as the desire for food and sleep. Confucius tells us of one occasion on which he departed from the middle way in his attempt to gain knowledge:

I have spent the whole day without food and the whole night without sleep in order to think. It was of no use. It is better to learn.⁸

Like Buddha, Confucius held that the extreme of asceticism and a renunciation of many of the physical necessities of life are to be avoided no less than that of wanton sensuality and luxury. A man should regard the need for food and sleep—and the satisfaction of other natural appetites—as necessary and prudent. An immoderate abstinence from these propensities is bad, as well as an immoderate indulgence in them. Confucius would have felt as ill at ease in the barrel of Diogenes as in the midst of a group of Cyrenaic tipplers. Confucius set no limit to wine drinking, but he never drank until he became fuddled. He emphasized the need for restraint in these appetites, but this restraint must be self-imposed. There is no one "right" amount of indulgence for everyone, or even for one man on every occasion. Each individual must discover for himself what precisely is the Golden Mean of conduct for him in respect to his many passions, appetites, and activities.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, Book XV, Chap. XXX.

On one occasion, Confucius asked to be pardoned for carrying a certain emotion to an extreme.

When Yen Yüan died the Master bewailed him with exceeding grief, whereupon his followers said to him, "Sir! You are carrying your grief to excess." "Have I gone to excess?" asked he. "*But if I may not grieve exceedingly over this man, for whom shall I grieve?*"⁹

Perhaps no single saying of Confucius reveals the essential humanity of the man (as well as the spirit of the ethics to which this study seeks to subscribe) in so striking a fashion as this particular story. Here we find the old lover of learning stricken with grief because of the death of his favourite disciple. One of his basic principles required that passions be experienced temperately. Here in his own experience there arises a conflict between theory and practice. The pedant would advocate the restraint of grief both because of its futility and, in the case of Confucius, because it runs directly counter to the latter's professed doctrine of the Mean. The Buddha would blame poor K'ung for his weakness in having allowed himself to become attached to such an object of love as a friend. The Stoics would criticize him possibly for not having the kind of "right" principles which would give him inward calmness in such a crisis. But K'ung was not a pedant, a Buddhist, or a Stoic. His question is exceedingly pertinent: Do not some situations involve passions to which even the path of the Golden Mean cannot apply? Are there not some feelings which under certain conditions cannot be evaluated even from the point of view of the otherwise quite adequate and genial criterion of the Middle Way? The wisdom of Confucius is perhaps demonstrated more unmistakably in this kind of lapse from his principles than in the general adequacy of those principles for many other situations. As flexible as the theory of the Mean already is in opposition to authoritarian theories of "right" conduct, it is not

⁹ *Op. cit.*, Book XI, Chap. IX (italics ours).

sufficiently flexible to include all of the major situations in human living. Confucius recognizes this fact, and asks us to pardon his immoderate grief and the breach of his own principles which it involves. Here, indeed, the man has enlarged his principles.

THE SUPERIOR MAN A MEAN BETWEEN NATURE AND ART

Confucius applies the theory of the Mean to the very character of the superior man. "Nature untempered by art," he holds, "is mere roughness; art alone without nature produces mere pedantry. It is only when nature and art are proportionately blended that you have the higher type of man."¹⁰ A basic feature of education is training in music and poetry. Confucius realized, as did Plato, that character is formed or unformed, steadied or broken, by the kinds of rhythms and melodies to which it becomes attuned. "The Master said, 'Let the character be formed by the poets; [made firm] by [conduct] and perfected by music.'" Character is formed by melodies and rhythms; without these influences there is a mere roughness. Rousseau's "noble savage" living an untamed "natural" existence would be, in Confucius' opinion, more savage than noble. Lao-tse's hermit, whatever his claims to mystical insight, would be merely a rough fellow. Education, however, must never destroy a kind of natural sincerity and goodness of heart which, Confucius implied, is latent in everyone. The study of music and art can be carried to such an extreme as to destroy all naturalness and sincerity. Botticelli's faces, with their excessive, monotonous delicacy of line and colour, produce the effect of unreality and superficiality. Some people are unable to carry out any emotion to the full. They have a sham enthusiasm, a sham hatred, a sham love, a sham taste, a sham grief, each of which flares and shines very vehemently for an instant, but then

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, Book XVI, Chap. XVI. While this translation, in the main, is Mr. Soothill's, it has been slightly altered in conformity with Lyall's translation, Longmans, Green, 1935.

subsides and gives place to the next sham emotion.¹¹ The Confucian gentleman will seek a certain degree of culture, but he will not be lacking in natural feelings.

THE NATURE OF GOVERNMENT

The kind of governmental control that Confucius believed to be wisest was a middle path between despotism and individualistic anarchy.

In passing by the side of Mount Thâi, Confucius came upon a woman who was weeping bitterly by a grave. The Master bowed forward to the crossbar, and hastened to her; and then sent Tsze-too to question her. "Your wailing," said he, "is altogether like that of one who has suffered sorrow on sorrow." She replied: "It is so. Formerly my husband's father was killed here by a tiger. My husband was also killed by one, and now my son has died in the same way." The Master said, "Why do you not leave this place?" The answer was, "There is no oppressive government here." The Master then said to his disciples: "Remember this, my little children. Oppressive government is more terrible than tigers."¹²

On the other hand, Mencius once said:

Yang's principle is, "Every man for himself," which does not recognize the superior claim of the sovereign. Mih's principle is, "Equal favour for all," which does not acknowledge the superior claim of a father. But to acknowledge neither sovereign nor father is to lapse into barbarism. . . . If the principles of Yang or of Mih were urged and the principles of Confucius were not urged, these perverse reasonings would delude the people and check the course of benevolence and righteousness. When such are checked, beasts will be led forth to devour men and men will devour one another.¹³

Confucius would have abhorred equally the absolute power of a Hobbesian sovereign and the absence of all government as

¹¹ Paraphrased from W. M. Thackeray, *The History of Pendennis*, Everyman's Library, Dutton, II, 364.

¹² Miles M. Dawson, *The Ethics of Confucius*, Putnam's, 1915, pp. 198-99; quoting *Li Ki, The Book of Ceremonies*, Book II, Sec. II, Part iii, 10.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 200-01; quoting Mencius, Book III, Part II, Chap. IX, 9.

advocated by Lao-tse and Tolstoi. He would have opposed the unrestricted authority of the Platonic legislator and the kind of democracy based upon the principle that "I am as good as you." Paternal rule is for him the ideal because it provides the same type of kindness and benevolence that flows from a father to his family.

Is there, in the opinion of Confucius, any one set of principles for wise ruling applicable to all States at all times? The following story¹⁴ will give his answer: On one occasion, Confucius was asked by King-Kung, "What is the essence of good government?" Confucius replied, "It consists of wisely regulating the wealth of the country." Later the duke of Lu asked Confucius, "What is the essence of good government?" Confucius replied, "It consists of a wise selection of officials." Still later the duke of Ye asked the same question, and Confucius replied, "It consists of pleasing the near-by people, and being easily accessible to those who live at a distance." After Ye had left, the question arose why the Master had given three different answers to the same question. His reply was that in answering this question he had considered the particular conditions in each state. King-Kung's government had been wasteful, emptying the public treasury to build terraces and parks. He had had elaborate public feasts and concerts; he had given one man a present of a house and a thousand war chariots. Therefore Confucius had told him that the essence of good government was the wise regulation of the wealth of the country. On the contrary, the ruler of Lu had turned domestic matters in the state over to a group of stupid, extravagant officials. Therefore Confucius assured him that the essence of good government lay in a wise selection of officials. In the third place, the domain of Ye was very large, while his palace district was very small; hence his people mistrusted his government as foreign to their interests. Therefore Confucius told

¹⁴ Paraphrased from J. H. Plath, *Confucius und seine Schüler Leben und Lehren*, Munich Academy, 1867-74, Vol. IV, pp. 77-78.

him that the essence of good government lay in pleasing the people near at hand and being easily accessible to those living at a distance.

Each of these different answers to the problem of good government refers to considerations that Confucius believed to be fundamental. The government must be especially concerned with an equitable distribution of wealth. In solving this problem, the wise way is the middle way. At the one extreme the danger of poverty must be guarded against. A government is a failure if there are vast uncultivated and undeveloped lands. At the other extreme there is the danger of excessive wealth. "Great riches make the people proud; and great poverty makes them wretched."¹⁵ Poverty leads to robbery and crime; pride leads to oppression. The sagacious ruler will prevent the wealthy from having enough power to be proud, while he will protect the poor from extreme want and from oppression by the more fortunate. While this control will inevitably lead to a kind of levelling of conditions, it will not lead to a destruction of all differences between wealthy and poor. The rich will be allowed to show their distinction.

Mencius explicitly mentioned the kind of negative, remedial attitude which continued poverty fosters. In poverty, he says, people try "*only* to save themselves from death and are afraid that they will not succeed. What opportunity have such to cultivate propriety and righteousness?"¹⁶ Or, as it might be asked: If a man's sole aim in life is of necessity the evasion of poverty, even if he succeeds, can it be said that he has lived wisely and well? Is not such a life negative, not because the avoidance of poverty is an unimportant matter, but because such a task precludes any search for more positive goals, not only for righteousness and propriety, but also for education, a career, family life, and achievements in such matters as art, science, and citizenship?

¹⁵ Dawson, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-89.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 196; quoting Mencius, Book I, Part I, Chap. vii, 22.

CONFUCIUS AND THE SUPERNATURAL

The question may be quite fairly asked: What was the attitude of Confucius, as an initiator of the ethics of wise conduct, towards the more ultimate questions of the possible existence of God and the final destiny of man? If Confucius formulated suggestive answers to many of the problems of human living, could he fail to carry his search for wisdom on towards deeper religious and metaphysical issues? As legitimate as these questions are, the answer is that, on the whole, Confucius remained exclusively preoccupied with problems of human character and conduct. In spite of several references to the laws of Heaven, he was nowhere specific concerning the meaning of such references. In spite of a painstaking interest in those ceremonies and rituals associated with death, burial, and reverence for ancestors, he nowhere mentions any specific religious theory. He virtually ignores the question of the existence of any supreme being. "The Master would not discuss prodigies, prowess, lawlessness, or the supernatural."

When Chi Lu asked about his duty to the spirits the Master replied, "While still unable to do your duty to the living, how can you do your duty to the dead?" When he ventured to ask about death, Confucius answered: "Not yet understanding life, how can you understand death?"¹⁷

Confucius seems to imply that the learner finds so many unanswered problems and unfulfilled duties in relation to living human beings that, pending a much deeper wisdom concerning the problems of human conduct, more ultimate questions must be put aside. The conception of ethics adhered to in this book is in agreement with this attitude. Final, theoretical wisdom is important, but a search for such wisdom would seem to come more appropriately at the end of an investigation of more specifically ethical problems. The student who aims at wisdom in conduct in personal and political living is facing difficulties

¹⁷ *The Analects*, Book VII, Chap. XX; Book XI, Chap. XI.

and perplexities that are great enough and absorbing enough in themselves. Doubtless, ultimate metaphysical and religious questions grow out of that search; but the answers to such questions, like the answers to many problems of conduct, must be sought by each student in his own way. Meanwhile we leave the views of Confucius to turn to another great student of conduct not unlike the Chinese Master.

B. Socrates

THE LIFE OF SOCRATES

Socrates, like the Sphinx, is and probably always will remain something of an enigma. This fact is due to several causes. In the first place, we are certain only of some of the facts of his life, while the precise significance even of those facts is in doubt. In the second place, in spite of his seventy years of life in an Athens that was full of writers, philosophical and literary, he wrote nothing. In the third place, the accounts of his life by contemporaries and juniors, Aristophanes, Xenophon, and Plato, give us three very different, and to a large extent contradictory, pictures of the man. In the fourth place, the descriptions of his character and teachings by modern philosophical scholars, far from showing clarity and agreement, have in many ways deepened our perplexity.¹⁸

Socrates (*c.* 470-399 B.C.), the son of Sophroniscus, a stone-cutter, and Phaenarete, an amateur midwife, was born in Athens. The major portion of his life was during the golden era of Athens under Pericles, an age of political, economic, and cultural achievement of the highest order. Sophocles and Euripides, the tragic playwrights; Herodotus and Thucydides, the great historians; and Phidias, the sculptor, were approximately his contemporaries, while the comic poet Aristophanes was some-

¹⁸ Taylor describes him as a man chiefly preoccupied with the "tendance of the soul"; Rogers makes him a mystic; while Fite makes him a man of questionable morals and a petty disposition.

what his junior. The great Sophists Protagoras, Gorgias, and Hippias lived during his time. Possibly he married twice, but in any case, his wife, the sharp-tongued Xantippe, saw him in his cell the day of his death; and one of his children was a mere stripling at that time. Possibly he was at one time a sculptor, and he was for some time a military man. Probably Kierkegaard is right in describing Diogenes¹⁹ as a "raving Socrates," which would mean that Socrates went barefooted and wore simple clothes, but that he did not indulge in the exaggerated and attention-provoking eccentricities of the inhabitant of the barrel. Indeed, Socrates was a source of inspiration to the Cynics, and it is conceivable that their mode of living represents an exaggeration of the simplicity which they observed in his ways. His short figure and his snub nose have become traditional.

In 431 the Peloponnesian war began, heralding the collapse of the power of Athens, and two years later Pericles died. In 424 the Thebans defeated the Athenians at Delium, and Socrates showed bravery and restraint in the retreat. In 423 Aristophanes' comedy, *The Clouds*, appeared, caricaturing Socrates and the Sophists. In 407, the young Plato, aged twenty, began his association with the master. In these last years of Socrates' life he was associated with the "beautiful" Alcibiades, later a traitor to his city; Critias, later one of the leading tyrants (the Thirty); and Charmides, another future tyrant and relative of Plato. Socrates' relations with these three men—however proper and, from Socrates' side, moral and educational—doubtless created a prejudice against him later on the part of the democrats.

In 406, the Athenians won a naval victory off the islets of Arginusae, but many men were lost, possibly because of the negligence of the commanders. Although Socrates was at that time a member of the Senate, he refused to be a party to the indictment of the commanders. In 404, the Lacedaemonians captured Athens, and Critias, Charmides, and the tyrannical Thirty

¹⁹ Cf. above, pp. 87-88.

took power, forcing many of the democratic leaders to flee the city, and slaying others. Perhaps the sole questionable part of Socrates' life concerns his precise relation to these tyrants. They were, we know, the friends and relatives of Plato, and many of them had been the close associates of Socrates. It would seem that they were enough convinced that Socrates was one of their clique to order him to take part in one of their "legal" murders, the killing of a certain Leon of Salamis. What did Socrates do? According to Professor Taylor, an admirer of Socrates:

The others performed the task, and Leon was duly murdered, but Socrates went straight home, though he expected to pay for his disobedience with his life, but for the counter-revolution which ended the Terror.²⁰

On the other hand, according to Professor Fite, who is no admirer of Socrates:

Did [Socrates] openly refuse [to take part in the murder]? He does not say so. Did he try to dissuade the others, or to prevent them from carrying out what he regarded as the commission of a crime—did he make any effort to save the life of Leon? All that he tells us is that, leaving the others to arrest Leon, "I simply went home." As for what he had to fear, well, we know that Critias, leader and dictator of the Thirty, had been one of his inner circle of friends and in some measure a disciple; and a simple omission could be ignored. . . . Leon was put to death but Socrates avoided breaking the law.²¹

In 403, upon the restoration of the democracy, a political truce was effected between the now dominant democrats and the aristocrats remaining in the city. This truce prevented anyone from publicly bringing a political charge. Most of the aristocrats sulked at home, hostile to the new régime, but not actively opposing it. Socrates, however, pursuant to his general mode of living, continued to carry on discussions of public questions in the market place, to the discomfort of the government. They

²⁰ A. E. Taylor, *Socrates*, Davies, 1932, p. 102.

²¹ Warner Fite, *The Platonic Legend*, Scribner's, 1934, pp. 105-06. By permission of the publishers.

probably bore him relatively little ill will (although this point is far from certain), but in any case they resented his questionings as now having direct political implications, in a way that had not been the case earlier.

Whether for political reasons or otherwise, in 399 two charges were preferred against Socrates: (1) Socrates does not accept the gods of the city, but introduces new gods. (2) Socrates corrupts youth. These charges were probably not designed to bring about his death, but merely to force him either to hold his tongue or leave the city. Far from admitting his guilt, or even showing deference for his judges, Socrates used his trial as an opportunity to accuse his judges of moral and political corruption, and showed his determination to continue his discussions with all comers in the market place on all subjects, including politics. He thus enraged them and provoked them to sentence him to death. After waiting in prison for several weeks for the return of the sacred vessel from Delos—the interim being a period during which there could be no executions in Athens—he drank the hemlock and died.

THE SOCRATES OF XENOPHON

Xenophon represents Socrates as a man not only innocent of the charges brought against him, but also a man of such mediocre abilities and commonplace ideas that it would seem surprising that he should have influenced people in any fashion whatsoever. The Socrates of Xenophon was a thorough bore. He would have been equally incapable of undermining the personal and political morals of his associates and of stimulating Plato and others to a search into philosophical and ethical questions. According to Xenophon's hero, calculating prudence and expediency should dominate the conduct of citizens and statesmen. A man should do his duty to his friends, his family, and his city because it will pay. Gluttony and sensuality bring harmful results and should, therefore, be avoided. Self-control is valuable as a means to successful living. A virtuous life is easier

and pleasanter than a vicious one. A smug sense of our own virtue and the virtue of our friends gives us pleasure. Can any thought be pleasanter than the thought, "I am growing in goodness and I am making better friends"? As Kierkegaard scornfully says of the Socrates of Xenophon:

His conception of friendship should not be confused with genuine enthusiasm. It is true that in his opinion no horse or donkey is as valuable as a friend, but from this fact it does not follow that *several* horses and *several* donkeys would not have quite as much worth as *one* friend.²²

It is prudent to pray to the gods to pardon your neglect of your parents, otherwise the gods may neglect you in return. If you wish a man to invite you to dinner, you should invite him first. In order to acquire useful friends, let us be useful ourselves. In general, a man should fear the gods, honour his parents, and live soberly.

Indeed, it would have been a dreadful mockery if the Athenians had executed such a sober pedant as the Xenophonic Socrates. Aristophanes would have been deliberately malicious in caricaturing him as a Sophist; Plato would have been guilty of an even greater misrepresentation in portraying him as a philosopher. It seems highly unlikely that the real Socrates was such a calculating prude and prig.

SOCRATES AND ARISTOPHANES

Probably some elements of the character of the true Socrates may be discovered in Aristophanes' caricature in his play, *The Clouds*. In the first place, as Professor A. E. Taylor points out, a successful caricature must not distort the original to a point where the audience will be unable to recognize the person intended. Several traits of the real Socrates are probably shown in the character in the play. Aristophanes' Socrates had a habit of long periods of absent-mindedness in which he ap-

²² Kierkegaard, *Der Begriff der Ironie*, Kaiser, 1929, p. 20.

peared to be in a trance. He was an eccentric both in his personal appearance and in his ideas. Furthermore, Aristophanes' account of the effect of Socrates upon the students in his "thinking factory" is possibly a comical description of the same effects that Plato described in a serious way. His students were encouraged to examine themselves, and Socrates tried to aid them, after the fashion of a midwife, to give birth to an idea. Behind Aristophanes' jesting about the effects of such teaching there probably lies the picture of the true Socrates. The results of all of the efforts of Aristophanes' Socrates to teach his students led to nothing constructive; his "clients" lost their beliefs in the importance of family ties and social obligations; and the comedy ends with an appeal to the audience to avoid the "new" philosophy because of its unqualifiedly harmful effects. This fact has caused many students of the Socratic philosophy to hold that Aristophanes in his caricature completely missed the serious side of Socrates' teaching. On the other hand, Kierkegaard would seem to be nearer the truth when he asserts that Aristophanes' play can be taken as irony. Aristophanes was deliberately caricaturing a philosopher whose teaching *could* have precisely the anarchical and destructive effects upon personal and political morals portrayed in the play. Aristophanes probably meant ironically that for most people to enter Socrates' "thinking factory" *would* lead to their "corruption." If his jesting is taken as irony, the cause of such "corruption" would lie not in the aims and methods of the "factory" but in the unqualified stupidity of the citizens, for whom any departure from an uncritical conception of virtue would indeed lead to a life of un-mixed vice. As Descartes once said, for most people the task of critically reforming their ideas is beyond their power. Without ready-made sets of precepts which they can unhesitatingly adopt, they are lost. For such people the inevitable result of exposure to the giddy atmosphere of the Socratic "thinking factory" is merely a kind of dizziness. Against these effects, Aristophanes'

play was ironically directed. All ye foolish ones, beware of Socrates.

SOCRATES AND PLATO

Most scholars are now agreed that our chief insight into the character and ideas of Socrates is gained from the dialogues of Plato. It is also rather generally held that the earlier dialogues reveal Socrates, while the later ones reveal only Plato. The controversy today concerns the question of precisely how many dialogues are to be included in the Socratic group. The older point of view, represented by Zeller, restricts the Socratic dialogues, roughly, to those written before Plato's first visit to Sicily in 390.²³ The newer theory, championed by Burnet and Taylor, includes as also Socratic the middle group of dialogues²⁴ written after the founding of the Academy in 387, but before Plato's second visit to Sicily in 368. In general, it would seem that the Socratic and Platonic influences in the dialogues are to be distinguished in terms of the content rather than of the date of the dialogue.²⁵ Wherever the dialogue reaches an ironic result, Plato was primarily portraying Socrates; wherever Plato superimposed upon that irony any positive speculation, he was departing from his recollection of the master, and developing his own ideas, doubtless in the spirit which he believed the Socratic philosophy would allow.

To get at the real Socrates in the Platonic dialogues it is necessary first to examine the conception of irony. To understand the connection of irony to the characters of Socrates and Plato, we must remember that even if Plato's own temperament was speculative rather than ironic, he must have been sufficiently acute to grasp the essence of the ironic principle in order to have portrayed it as effectively as he did in those dialogues which are avowedly Socratic. The reader will recall that Plato's views exemplify mainly theories of the good and of right conduct.

²³ Including *Apology*, *Crito*, *Charmides*, *Protagoras*, *Euthedemus*, *Gorgias*, and *Meno*.

²⁴ *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Cratylus*, *Phaedrus*.

²⁵ The student should remember that this is not the most generally accepted view.

Although there are certain limitations in those views which make them incommensurate with the ethics of wise conduct, nevertheless Plato is our key to Socrates. Everything that can be detected in the character and teachings of Socrates, indicative of a theory of wise living, Plato was wise enough to grasp and acute enough to describe. Therefore Socratic irony reaches us through the eyes of Plato the artist, if not through Plato the moralist.

IRONY, THE NEGATION OF CHARACTER AND CONDUCT BY WORDS

Irony (*eirōneia*) literally means "feigned ignorance." Surely, Falstaff, you do not like sack and capons. Are you, O Marxian, really interested in the working class? Such words are ironic in the sense that the speaker knows, or believes that he knows, the answer already, and is nevertheless talking as if he did not know. If carried far enough, such irony would include every teacher's request that his pupils repeat the multiplication table. Only if a teacher himself did not know the table would his request not be ironic, in this widest sense of the word. While, therefore, there may be an element of feigned ignorance in every ironic remark, there must be a great deal more. The remark to Falstaff about his tastes is ironic not merely because of feigned ignorance, but because of a double, and hence an insincere, meaning. We know that the stout man likes Spanish wine, and we are twitting him about the matter. We say literally that he does not like it, only to imply (in this case rather obviously) that he does. In the question put to the Marxian, the irony may be taken in an even subtler sense, if we mean that he really (by his conduct) is not helping the working class, although we say, and he believes, that he is. If detected, the effect of the double meaning of such irony is to produce in the mind of the person to whom it is directed the impression that we are superior to him because of reasons, ungiven, that we have for suspecting his character, taste, beliefs, or conduct to be not what he supposes. We say nothing of our reasons for

suspecting that a taste for sack and capons is not a wise taste, but Falstaff *might* detect the irony and wonder what we meant. If detected, the irony might produce ill will. Falstaff doubtless would genially tolerate our irony about his taste for food, as long as he got the food. The Marxian might genially accept our ironic implication that his interest in the working class was not all that it should be. On the other hand, he might be quite annoyed, and counter with some equally ironic question about our own interests in social betterment; and then, again, he might merely be annoyed.

While irony tends to produce a feeling of antagonism in the person to whom it is directed, two variables limit such feeling. In the first place, the irony may be sharp or gentle, with varying degrees between. The sharper it becomes, the more indistinguishable it is from sarcasm (literally "a gnashing of the teeth"), while the milder it remains, the greater the element of sincerity that it conveys. "You prohibitionists have certainly eliminated crime." Here the ironic and sarcastic elements are hardly distinguishable, and the retort is apt to be, in kind, "Of course, you don't favour repeal because you drink." Sarcasm is always unfriendly and sharp and always provokes hostility. On the other hand, gentle irony is compatible with a sincere feeling of well-wishing, and may be received as such. "Come now, Glaucon, you know what justice is." In many of Plato's dialogues, the sincerity of Socrates in wishing to aid his friends to give birth to an idea almost obscures his ironic conviction that none will be forthcoming. By skilfully alternating the sincere and ironic elements, Socrates keeps the conversation on a friendly plane. If we imagine a person alternately pinching and stroking a cat, we get a notion of the effect of Socrates' alternate use of irony and sincerity. Only if we writhe too much under the irony are we apt to mistake the sincerity for mere flattery. A diabetes patient dies from too little insulin, but also from too much; a Socratic listener needs some irony for the good of his

soul, but not too much. The Sophists, being professionally wise, could "see through" Socrates' irony and were *never* taken in.

A second variable also limits the feeling of antagonism which irony produces; namely, the stupidity of the listener. For some people irony is nonexistent; all remarks are either sincere or sarcastic. Only the sharpest pinch can awaken some cats; even stroking the wrong way is mistaken by some cats for friendly petting. In addressing his five hundred Athenian citizen-judges, Socrates was forced to raise his irony to the pitch of sarcasm; otherwise his irony would have been mistaken for sincerity. Consequently he ran a much greater risk of provoking the ill will of his audience. The ironic attitude which he could so effectively temper in quiet conversations became lost in an alternation of serious and sarcastic effects. The result was a severer sentence than the judges had intended, and probably one that they regretted shortly afterwards in a cooler moment. The ironist unquestionably runs such risks.

SOCRATIC IRONY AS SELF-IRONY: VIRTUE IS KNOWLEDGE

We are now in a position to ask the all-important question: What was Socrates' ethical teaching? The answer to this question is that for Socrates *virtue is knowledge*, but that for him such a conception of virtue was from first to last ironic.²⁶ Virtue is knowledge; but who has knowledge? Against whom was this irony directed? Seemingly against Charmides in regard to temperance; against Laches in regard to courage; against Euthyphron in regard to holiness, and Thrasymachus in regard to justice. Actually, throughout his life, his irony was directed against himself, Socrates. Virtue is the most valuable thing in life. Ay, there's the rub. Virtue is knowledge; Socrates lacks knowledge; therefore, Socrates lacks virtue, and it is supremely ironical for him to be discussing ethics. Such was the part and parcel of the Socratic ethics. How dismaying to the admirers

²⁶ This account of Socratic irony is based in part upon Kierkegaard's views.

of Socrates; how bewildering to his critics! Only Plato understood, and he only in part. Xenophon was sure that he knew: Socrates must have meant that virtue is prudence and expediency, the careful avoidance of all evils, prevention and remedy *ad nauseam*. He would rescue Socrates from his detractors by showing him to be a pillar of Athenian society. Aristophanes also knew: Socrates was a Sophist, the teacher of a "new" morality, subverting the state, corrupting youth. Aristippus also knew: Virtue is sensuality. The coin that Socrates really valued was the flesh and the devil. Notice his effect upon Alcibiades' life and conduct. Diogenes also knew: Socrates was a Cynic, the first of that noble band. Look at his dress; see his bare feet. How negligent that he overlooks the comforts of a barrel!

In the case of Plato the situation is somewhat more complicated. Unlike all the others, Plato understood the real Socrates. Every whit of insight that we can get today regarding this founder of the ethics of wise living (excluding Aristophanes' perhaps unintended truth) comes from the Platonic dialogues. Plato's primary intention in the *Republic* was to pass from the enigmatic Socrates of the first book, on to his own spokesman, the tireless builder of the good state, in the last nine books. But Plato was enough of an artist to treat his hero fairly before he turned him into a mouthpiece for his own ideas. Plato knew quite well that Socrates' own conclusions ended in the inevitable: I know that I do not know. Like the rest of the associates of Socrates, Plato knew that the master held (a) virtue is knowledge; and (b) I know that I don't know. Unlike the rest of the Socratics, Plato could put two and two together. He knew that the basis for the Socratic irony was the distressing outcome of putting these two ideas together. Therefore, Plato (out of loyalty to the ideas of his master) drew a clear line in his dialogues between the negative ironic conclusions which a man who believed that virtue is knowledge, and yet that he himself had no knowledge, would be forced to draw, and those

other, important, positive conclusions which he, Plato, believed that his master would have drawn if he had only had "right" principles. Where is this line between Plato and Socrates to be found in the Platonic dialogues?

SOCRATES' TEACHING IN THE PLATONIC DIALOGUES

Every dialogue (early or late) that ends in the vein of "we know that we do not know" represents Plato's masterful ability to recapture the major premiss of his master.

The *Charmides* begins with the idea that the young man after whom the dialogue is named is temperate and recognized as such by everyone. Yet the dialogue leads to the conclusion that neither Charmides, nor Critias, nor Socrates *knows* what temperance is, and hence it is a philosophical travesty upon temperance that they should be discussing it. Positive result: Socrates values temperance above everything, but he doesn't know what it is; virtue is knowledge; hence Socrates is not virtuous; and all discussions by Socrates on the subject of temperance must be taken ironically.

The *Laches* ends with the idea that Laches is admitted by everyone to be the personification of courage. Yet the "daemon" in the discussion gives forth only the ironical result that neither Laches, nor Nicias, nor Socrates knows what courage is. Positive result: The same ironic conclusion of Socrates about himself.

Hippias II deals with a slightly different problem, only to yield a similar conclusion. Socrates and his audience are all aware that deliberate evil-doing is worse than unintentional immorality. Yet Socrates realizes that in every type of activity in which skill is praised, the man who does poorly intentionally is considered to be in a more laudable position than the well-meaning fellow who nevertheless behaves incompetently. He therefore leads the discussion along the following lines:

Which, then, is the better runner, he who runs slowly voluntarily or he who does so involuntarily?

H. He who does it voluntarily. . . .

Which is the better wrestler, he who is thrown voluntarily, or involuntarily?

H. He who is thrown voluntarily, as it seems. . . .

Would you . . . choose to possess feet that limp voluntarily, or involuntarily?

H. Voluntarily.²⁷

Completing the series of questions with reference to bodily activities, Socrates forces from Hippias the same admissions about various types of sense-perceptions, and then says:

And how is it in the art of medicine? Is not the mind which does harm to the patients' bodies voluntarily the more scientific?

H. Yes. . . .

Well now, the more musical, whether with the lyre or with the flute, and in everything else that concerns all the other arts and sciences—is not that mind better which voluntarily does bad and disgraceful things and commits errors, whereas that which does so involuntarily is worse?

H. Apparently.²⁸

Then comes the leading question:

Will it, then, be better if [we do] evil and err . . . voluntarily, or involuntarily?

Hippias, now awake to the treacherous result of the argument:

But it would be a terrible thing, Socrates, if those who do wrong voluntarily are to be better than those who do so involuntarily.

In this dialogue we find Socrates' irony at its best. According to every common-sense criterion, Socrates, Hippias, and everyone else *know* that deliberate wrongdoing is worse than accidental mistakes. Yet Socrates lets the argument (based upon an analogy between skilful and ethical acts) carry him to the con-

²⁷ Plato, *Lesser Hippias*, Fowler's translation, The Loeb Classical Library, Vol. VI, Heinemann, Harvard, 1926, §§373-74. By permission of the publishers.

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, §375.

clusion that deliberate evil-doing is better than involuntary error because the deliberate evil-doer (like Fritz Kreisler playing badly in jest) can improve at will. In athletic contests, flute-playing, etc., such improvement is greatly appreciated by the audience, and quite rightly leads us to call such a performer *better* than the well-meaning bore who has enticed us to the wrestling arena or concert hall only to swindle us for our pains.

Sober searchers for "right" principles will find in this dialogue evidence that Socrates was suggesting the difference between our correct evaluation of the *intention* in ethics and criminology, and *performance* in the arts and skills. They give Plato less credit than he deserves. Socrates knew that he knew masses of facts about conduct, wrestling, flute-playing, etc. He did not believe that this was genuine knowledge, at least not the kind of knowledge that was involved in virtuous living, private and political. But the wise way of life for men and cities was the most important concern of Socrates' life. Therefore either the kind of knowledge which the specialists displayed in their skills *was* virtue, or some other, undiscovered type of knowledge was essential to all political and ethical virtue. No such second type of knowledge seemed forthcoming. Yet it ran counter to every ethical instinct of man to judge wise living in the same way that we judge flute-playing. Hence Socrates' ironic conclusion, directed towards himself:

Then he who voluntarily errs and does disgraceful and unjust acts, Hippias, if there be such a man, would be no other than the good man.

H. I cannot agree with you, Socrates, in that.

Nor I with myself, Hippias; but that appears at the moment to be the inevitable result of our argument; however, as I was saying all along, in respect to these matters I go astray, up and down, and never hold the same opinion. . . .²⁹

As in the case of temperance, as in the case of courage, Socrates ends in irony. The positive answers as to the nature of evil-

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, §376.

doing and its opposite are barren. We know that we do not know; yet virtue is knowledge. What, then, is the wise way?

In the *Protagoras*, the drama is repeated with the same result. The essence of Protagoras' life is the doctrine that virtue can be taught. When Socrates finishes his discussion with the great Sophist, they agree that it can be maintained neither that virtue can or cannot be taught. For Socrates this conclusion is negative enough, but not out of harmony with his convictions. The irony of the situation does not strike the famous Sophist, who doubtless on the same day accepted fees for "teaching virtue."

In the *Euthedemus*, the situation is slightly different. Socrates allows himself for once to be dogmatically forced into silence. Euthedemus *proves* that a man must know everything always, past, present, and future. In the same way that Ibsen parodied the Ibsenites in *The Wild Duck*, never becoming thereby the slightest bit less Ibsen, so Plato seems to have noticed an ability in Socrates to listen good-humouredly, and not without a certain sympathy, while young men carried his methods of inquiry to ludicrous extremes. A parody on the "new" ethics is here, indeed, carried by a masterful hand to newer and dizzier heights without the aid of clouds. Sample:

Dionysodorus [Socrates having lapsed into amused silence]: Just tell me, have you a dog?

Ctesippus: Yes, a real rogue.

Has he got puppies?

Yes, a set of rogues like him.

Then is the dog their father . . . ?

Thus he is a father, and yours, and accordingly the dog turns out to be your father, and you a brother of whelps.

. . . Do you beat this dog?

Ctesippus, laughing: My word, yes; since I cannot beat you!

So you beat your own father? ³⁰

³⁰ Plato, *Euthedemus*, Lamb's translation, The Loeb Classical Library, Vol. IV, Heinemann, Harvard, 1937, §298E. By permission of the publishers.

Most important of all, the first book of Plato's *Republic* ends with a completely negative, ironic result, in spite of the detailed picture of the ideal city which it precedes. Thrasymachus, the first immoralist,³¹ has had his say, and Socrates (the Platonic Socrates) has shown the *advantages* of justice. Then, faithful to the memory of his master, Plato ends the book as follows:

"Then, my noble Thrasymachus, injustice is never more profitable than justice."

"Well, Socrates," he said, "let that be your entertainment for the feast of Bendis."

"I have you to thank for it, Thrasymachus," I said, "since you became gentle with me, and stopped being disagreeable. But I have no satisfaction in my feast. That is my fault, not yours. I am like those greedy fellows who before they have properly enjoyed what is before them leave it to snatch at and taste every dish that comes their way. I have done the same. We left the original object of our inquiry, the definition of justice, before we had discovered it, and went off to consider whether it is a vice and ignorance, or wisdom and virtue. Then another argument appeared, to the effect that injustice is more profitable than justice. And I could not refrain from leaving what we were at for this further point, so that now the result of our conversation is that I know nothing. For when I do not know what justice is, I am hardly likely to know whether it be a virtue or not, or whether he that possesses it is unhappy or happy." ³²

In the succeeding nine books, Plato remedies rather thoroughly this absence of knowledge concerning the nature of justice. Like Xenophon and other Socratic apologists, he was quite certain that Socrates meant something by justice. Whether what he meant was the elaborated scheme of the ideal city may very well be doubted. Irony has different implications, and as clearly as Plato caught the spirit of that irony, he felt called upon, like many another student of ethics, to build something upon the

³¹ Cf. above, pp. 99-101.

³² Plato, *Republic*, Lindsay's translation, Everyman's Library, Dutton, 1926, §354. By permission of the publishers.

ruins left by the famous man who knew that virtue was knowledge, and yet that he himself did not have knowledge.

SOCRATES AND THE ETHICS OF WISE LIVING: IRONY AS A NEGATIVE
PHASE OF THE SEARCH

Socrates' teachings began and ended in the ironic conviction that virtue is knowledge. If Kierkegaard is correct, this conclusion was for the master a source of deep tranquillity. His "mission" in life was to bring home this "truth" to his dogmatic, uncritical contemporaries. As he tells us in Plato's *Apology*: *The unexamined life is not fit for human living*. He had been sent by God to examine into the lives and prejudices of others, to show them how little their pretended knowledge of personal and political virtue amounted to. The knowledge which he knew himself not to have, he could at least show others that they also lacked. His "mission" was to awaken the Athenian people to a knowledge of their personal and political corruption, as a gadfly stings a sluggish horse. Whenever he found a dogmatic politician, poet, or artisan, his task was to expose his ignorance and cause him to become aware of his consequent lack of virtue. The pretenders to temperance, courage, holiness, justice, and other virtues he proposed to lead to a knowledge of their own lack of knowledge. Such negative "illumination" accomplished, Socrates left the discomfited pretender in the clouds, no longer *uncritically* sure of himself and his virtue, but equally far from any critical certainty in the matter. Each of his victims doubtless recoiled in a different direction from such pedagogy. Xenophon missed the irony, but Antisthenes became the Cynic, Aristippus the confirmed hedonist, and Critias a tyrant. Socrates himself adopted no dogmatic views; and he was not responsible for such misinterpretations. While others interpreted he remained in his irony. He neither fretted nor fumed in his lack of knowledge. Plato, remaining long enough under the spell to understand, eventually passed from self-questioning to a positive, speculative study of *the forms*, the good, the beau-

tiful, and the holy.³³ As un-Socratic as such speculative theories are, they represent the kind of edifice which most students of ethics seek to erect when they cease to remember their own lack of knowledge.

In modern times the ironist is more apt to avoid ethical theory and become a self-reproaching Hamlet or a mocking Faust. In opposition to all of these attitudes, Socrates himself remained true to his one practical aim: A continual, unending, critical examination of his own life and the lives of others. Such a life alone is in his opinion fit for human living.

For most modern students of ethics, this aim cannot be turned into a life-career. A few die-hards use some corner of the modern world as an Athenian market place, passing their lives in cross-examining their fellows. These people should not be discouraged from their pursuit. Yet Socrates' teachings can be taken not as an injunction to a life "mission," but as an essential phase of every life that aims at wisdom in conduct. Whatever other elements wise living turns out to require, there must be an accompanying aspect of self-doubt and self-criticism. Towards whatever goals we may direct our various courses, we must remember the Socratic injunction to self-examination, lest our life become unfit for human living. For most people, such examination could not (even if it were desirable) lead to an exclusive preoccupation with the characters and motives of others. For most people, the necessity of active conduct quickly carries beyond the moments of self-doubt and irony. Therefore the value of Socratic doubt must lie for them not in replacing all accomplishment, but in enabling them to bring to various ethical situations a certain open-mindedness and freedom from cant which emulation of the great Athenian can indeed engender. In a word, Socratic irony can become a feature of wise living without itself being a way of life.

³³ It should be remembered that the Platonic Socrates seeks these forms in the *Phaedo* on the day of his death, also in the *Meno* and in the last book of the *Republic*, only to lose them in the *Parmenides* in the face of superior irony.

Unending self-examination will bake no bread. Its immediate effects are always negative. With reference to some conceptions of ethics its effects are also mainly destructive. This is true of the four major dogmatisms against which the four preceding chapters of this book have been directed: the study of right conduct; the search for "the good"; the belief that the inner life is the sole locus of value; and the belief that group life is the sole locus of value. None of these conceptions of ethics survives critical analysis. They are narrow extremes and can never be taken starkly by the student of wisdom in the conduct of life. Every theory of right rules ignores many major problems of personal and group living. Each theory of the good construes all ethical evaluation in its own tongue, and ignores all other languages. The defenders of inward spirituality and group welfare, while formulating conceptions of wise living, distort—in opposite and contradictory directions—the total ethical situation, which should indeed include both spiritual and group problems, but also many others.

The theory of wisdom in conduct does not reject all of the ideas and attitudes embodied in these four conceptions of ethics. To do so would be as dogmatic and uncritical as to accept any one of them as the sole clue to follow. Those phases of the theories of the good and right yielding insight into problems of conduct must be accepted for what they are worth. They will be accepted, however, not because of any unique truth which they bear, apart from matters of conduct, but solely because they harmonize with the fruits of critical discrimination, evaluation, and practice. For this reason, they are chosen and considered wise. Similarly, to the extent that the search for wise goals requires a consideration of inward, spiritual values—values of character and conscience as opposed to those of conduct—these values will be accepted as deserving respect and allegiance. They will not be accepted, however, because no other values are important. Likewise, the student of wise conduct must also concern himself with problems of group living and

group welfare. He will not consider, however, that these problems are the only important ones. It is the elevation of any one of these four theories to a rank of exclusive importance in human life that the critical student of ethics will reject. For him, Socrates supplies a masterful method for dealing with such dogmatisms.

THE SOCRATIC ETHICS AS AN ETHICS OF SITUATIONS

Only for such dogmatic, one-sided accounts of ethics will the Socratic method prove mainly ironic and destructive. Its tentativeness is quite compatible with a more humble search for the wise way in particular ethical situations. If an antecedently established theory of virtue or wisdom were required before a person could turn his attention and efforts to particular problems of conduct, then indeed the ethics of wisdom would end in irony. If a person must be wise before he can be wise in conduct, Confucius' decision to enter politics while he was merely a learner was profoundly ironical, and only the Socratic way of life is justified. If, on the other hand, such wisdom as a person is able to attain in conduct can be won only in, through, and subsequent to, active experiences in personal and political living, a search for such wisdom is the antithesis of an examination of self that never passes over into effort and action. An attempt to discover justice may lead to irony, but such irony would command more respect in the mouth of a Mr. Justice Holmes than in that of a young theorist. Irony about filial affection is less distasteful coming from a Lear than from Hamlet's mother. Irony about marital relations is more understandable in the case of Othello than in that of Iago. Irony about the efficacy of medical treatment comes with better grace from a skilled physician than from a quack. In every case, a search for truth and wisdom may end in uncertainty or even despair. If that search has been open-minded and responsible, the resulting doubt is not on a par with the disillusionment which precedes all effort. To the extent that active effort to discover wisdom

in responsible living is successful, the positive values and virtues which are then defended will not be on a par with those dogmatic theories of conduct which have possessed the right answers from the start.

While, then, Socrates gives us only a negative clue to wise conduct, his views are not out of harmony with an ethics of situations. His ironic conclusions are less incompatible with a study of specific problems of conduct than with a more theoretical search for the good. The nature of wisdom which seems hidden to us when we seek it directly may show itself to some extent in relation to particular contexts and problems. In turning to an investigation of situations, we must remember that all unexamined lives stand judged by the "gadfly" of Athens as foolish and not worth human living.

Fortunately, Socrates had as a successor not only a student who conceived of ethics as the study of the good, but also a man who sought the wisest and most nearly complete type of life. In ethics, the ironic questioning of Socrates fertilized the field not only for the speculations of Plato, but also for the search for wise conduct by Aristotle. The latter supplies the positive ethical content to the Socratic dictum that virtue is knowledge, and enables us to supplement (not replace) Socrates' irony with something more creative and fruitful. Before turning to an examination of particular problems of conduct we must, therefore, consider the theory of ethics of Aristotle.

CHAPTER VII

ETHICS IS THE STUDY OF WISDOM IN CONDUCT (*Continued*)

A. Aristotle

THE LIFE OF ARISTOTLE

ARISTOTLE was born at Stagira, on the peninsula of Chalcidice, in 384 B.C. His father, Nicomachus, had been the court physician and friend of Amyntas, the king of the Macedonians; conceivably Aristotle's later interest in zoology, as well as his constant use of medical examples in his ethics, was due to his childhood in the home of a medical man. At any rate, he constantly draws an analogy between problems of conduct and those of medicine. At the age of seventeen he was sent to Athens to study at Plato's Academy. For the next twenty years, until Plato's death in 347, the two greatest speculative minds in Greek philosophy enjoyed contact with each other. Shortly after 347, Aristotle married Phythias, the niece of the enlightened despot Hermias of Assos and Atarneus in the Troad; his married life seems to have been one of deep devotion, both to his wife, until her death about fifteen years later, and to his daughter. In 343, Philip of Macedon asked Aristotle to become the tutor of his son Alexander. The philosopher apparently had very little influence upon this remarkable young man, the disruption of whose empire was destined to mark the decline of the Greek world, yet the relation between the two had a most important result for Aristotle. When Alexander came to the throne, he sponsored Aristotle's school, the Lyceum, founded in Athens in 335. In this famous school the students and the master strolled about in leisurely fashion while discussing philosophy, thereby eliminating the passivity

of body (if not of mind) of a lecture audience. When Alexander died in 323, a charge of impiety was brought against Aristotle, possibly because of his Macedonian connections and possibly also because of the jealousy of the rival Athenian schools of the Platonists and the followers of Isocrates. Unlike Socrates, Aristotle decided to leave the city "lest the Athenians sin twice against philosophy."

Aristotle's studies in such fields as logic, zoology, ethics, politics, economics, dramatic criticism, etc., represent the attempt of a master to study man and his place in the universe, and to make all knowledge his province. Of his ethical studies, we have today three treatises, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Magna Moralia*, and the *Eudemian Ethics*. These studies overlap to a sufficiently large extent to suggest the possibility that one or two of them are transcriptions or elaborate paraphrases.

THE CONCEPTION OF ENDS IN NATURE AND CONDUCT

Aristotle's general philosophy stresses the idea of teleology or purpose in nature and in human conduct. The motions of the planets, the growth of plants, the behaviour of animals and men, involve not merely the operation of forces in their present environment, but in every case a development towards ends as yet unrealized, or forms or goals lying in the future. A plant seed is dependent for its life and growth upon not only its present environment of soil, air, light, etc., but also upon the "form" or principle of the developed plant into which it is growing. An acorn is determined in its growth no less by its end (the full-grown oak) than by the various chemicals playing at present upon it. A puppy is at present growing into a dog; its future nature as a dog enters actively into its present life and guides it. The type of causation involving the development or growth towards ends or goals is called "telic" causation, in opposition to the "efficient" or "moving" causation of the various present elements in its environment.

In human life these two types of causation are even more

clearly distinguishable. The sculptor, to use Aristotle's example, has as his purpose or end the completed statue. This end "pulls"¹ him towards it. The energy put into the cutting, chipping, and the like, is, on the other hand, the moving or "efficient" cause of the statue, the stimulus from outside which "pushes" the statue to completion. In most cases of human activity, it is impossible not to notice a real or envisaged end; we lie down (means) to sleep (end); we lift our knives and forks (means) to eat (end); we eat (means) to live (end), or, in the case of some people, we live (means) to eat (end). From the lacing of a shoe to the ruling of a state or the painting of a picture, there are, in human conduct, ends of various scope and worth.

In Aristotle's theory of ends there is a basic distinction between potentiality and actuality. A seed is potentially a plant. An acorn is potentially an oak. A puppy is potentially a grown dog. A piece of marble is potentially a statue. Of course, the seed, acorn, puppy, or marble may not actually become the plant, oak, dog, or statue; for time, chance, and environmental influences make themselves felt. In every case of mere potentiality, a host of additional conditions is required for the actual thing to come into being. The seed may fall upon the rocks; the acorn may not take root; the puppy may not get food; the marble may be chipped by a novice. The significant feature of Aristotle's theory of ends lies in his assumption that the histories of animate and inanimate things, of plants, animals, and men, involve the development of those potentialities or capacities in such a way that the full-grown form or type becomes an actuality.

Much of Aristotle's general philosophy consists in his attempt to discover what precisely the developed form of the thing, animal, or man really is. The nature of plants, he holds, includes nutrition, sensitivity, and growth; of animals, mobility,

¹ Using C. E. M. Joad's expression; cf. Joad, *Guide to Philosophy*, Random House, 1936, p. 186; pp. 191-92; pp. 291-92.

nutrition, sensitivity, growth, and appetite; of man, nutrition, sensitivity, mobility, growth, appetite, action, and reason. These various natures overlap, but the essential character of each is different. A plant is most peculiarly itself when it is nourished and grows; on the other hand, an animal reaches its particular end when it moves, grows, and satisfies its appetites. Unlike both of these classes, a man achieves his most specifically human end when he exercises his reasoning powers.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL REASON: ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION
OF ACTIVITY

While the specific nature of man, in opposition to that of the animals, lies, in Aristotle's opinion, in his reasoning powers, Aristotle does not mean thereby only the exercise of speculative reasoning in science and philosophy. In fact, he holds that speculative reasoning is in a sense a divine element in man, and that in so far as man is able to carry on a contemplative life of *theoria*, he has risen above his merely human nature. For most men most of the time, reasoning is practical, concerned with activity or action. Aristotle considers "action" or "activity," in a limited sense, to exclude the acts of animals. A man "acts" when there is a principle lying within his character according to which, or determined by which, his mere motion proceeds. Strictly speaking, a compulsory "act" is impossible, for a man does not act until there are motives present in his character which constrain or move him. In opposition to theoretical reason, there is a kind of practical reason, according to which (or, in the case of the incontinent man, in opposition to which) every action proceeds. Such a description of "action" as carried on only by man, and even then as expressed in every case in terms of motives and in some way related to practical reason, sounds very odd to our modern ears, trained as we are to think of "mechanical" motion as a type of "action." Aristotle's meaning becomes quite clear if we substitute the term "conduct" for "act." The idea of conduct has certain definite ethical connota-

tions, in a way not unlike Aristotle's conception of an act. There is action or behaviour by animals,² but there is no such thing as animal "conduct." If Aristotle's conception of practical reason is to become intelligible, we must remember that it concerns "action" in the sense of proceeding from formed motives in a human being—or, as we would say, it concerns conduct.

THE MEANING OF VIRTUE OR MORAL EXCELLENCE

There is considerable danger of misunderstanding Aristotle's conception of *aretê*, whether it is rendered in English as "virtue" or as "excellence." On the one hand, the word "virtue" sometimes refers in English chiefly to chastity or marital fidelity on the part of women. If the term is applied to men, the meaning frequently concerns honour and bravery, particularly in battle. Now, Aristotle's meaning includes such virtues. On the other hand, possibly due to the Biblical tradition with its account of a kind of innate goodness in man, possibly also due to the spread of the Christian conception of purity and innocence as major virtues, the English term carries frequently the implication of a complete difference in kind between virtues, on the one hand, which are passive, innate, unspoiled conditions, and, on the other hand, skills and excellences which are the products almost entirely of practice. In opposition to this distinction, Aristotle stresses the fact that training and practice are essential both to achieve moral excellence and to retain it. Therefore, we are frequently nearer Aristotle's meaning if we translate *aretê* as "excellence" rather than "virtue."

We must remember, then, that moral excellence or virtue, according to Aristotle, concerns usually the same passions and attitudes as those to which the English term "virtue" normally applies, but that he conceives the manner of achieving virtue

² Usually it becomes rather determined and "mechanical," in the descriptions of modern physiologists.

or excellence to involve the kind of skill and practice which we normally associate with learned activities.

Virtue [or excellence] is a habit or trained faculty of choice, the characteristic of which lies in observing the mean relatively to the persons concerned, and which is guided by reason, *i.e.*, by the judgement of the prudent man [man of practical wisdom].³

Virtue is not a capacity or faculty for feeling emotions, nor is it a passion or feeling. For we are not good or bad because of our emotions, but we are good or bad in so far as we do virtuous or vicious deeds. We are not praised or blamed for such emotions as fear or anger, but for the way in which we express them, while we are praised or blamed for being virtuous or vicious. Also we may be angry or afraid without deliberate choice, but virtue and vice involve deliberation and choice, or at least are impossible without it. Lastly, while we are moved by our emotions, our virtues and vices concern our disposition or attitude. Therefore virtues are settled habits or trained faculties.

What is the nature of these habits? In the first place, as in Confucius' theory, they involve the following of the "mean" or "middle" path with reference to ourselves in the experience of certain emotions. With the exception of a few passions which are wholly bad, such as the impulse towards murder, adultery, etc., all emotions are capable of being experienced too strongly or too weakly, too much or too little. In the story of Goldilocks and the three bears, Goldilocks tasted one bowl of soup and found it too hot; then she tasted another and found it too cold; then she tasted the third, and found it "just right." Similarly, in the cases of most emotions, there is an amount of expression and indulgence which is "just right." This right amount is not always precisely equidistant from the two extremes. Possibly the soup that Goldilocks found just right was somewhat nearer hot than cold. Similarly, bravery is somewhat nearer to the

³ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Peters' translation, Kegan Paul, 1881, Book II, 6, 15.

extreme of rashness than to that of cowardice. Furthermore, the right middle point in a passion is not necessarily precisely the same for everyone. Six pounds of meat is a precise mean between ten pounds and two; but for an athlete in training six pounds a week may be too little, while for a student it may be too much. Similarly, the amount of alcohol that Socrates was able to drink without over-indulging on that memorable evening described in Plato's *Symposium* was apparently much too much for his companions.

In general, virtue is the habit of observing the mean in passions—that is, selecting the middle amount with reference to ourselves and our capacities and natures. Aristotle advises us to steer our course slightly towards the extreme from which we are by nature more distant, in the same way that a bent plank is straightened by bending it slightly beyond the straight line (mean) in the other direction. In sensual pleasures, most people are more apt to overdo than underdo matters; therefore most people should select a path somewhat in the direction of under-indulgence.⁴

Should each individual rely exclusively upon his own judgment in discovering the mean or middle path for himself in reference to his passions and appetites? Aristotle's answer to this question is not so clear as it might be. In his definition of

⁴ TOO MUCH	MEAN	TOO LITTLE
irascibility	gentleness	lack of feeling
audacity	bravery	cowardice
shamelessness	modesty	shyness
intemperance	temperance	insensibility
envy	righteous indignation	(unnamed)
gain	the just	loss
lavishness	liberality	meanness
boastfulness	sincerity	self-depreciation
habit of flattery	friendliness	habit of dislike
servility	dignity	stubbornness
luxuriousness	endurance	submission to evils
vanity	greatness of spirit	meanness of spirit
extravagance	magnificence	pettiness
cunning	prudence	simplicity

Aristotle, *Ethica Eudemia*, Solomon's translation, edited by Ross, Clarendon, 1915, 1220b-1221a, line 37 to line 12. By permission of the publishers.

virtue he tells us that the judgement of the man of practical wisdom or prudence is the genuinely rational one, and hence is to be followed. On the other hand, the care with which he points out the wide differences in capacity and temperament in individuals, and the resulting variety among the "right" mean or middle points, shows that he was keenly aware of the necessity of every man's discovering for himself, to some extent, his own particular middle way. If Aristotle meant to stress our reliance upon the judgement of the man of prudence or practical wisdom at the expense of all individual experimentation and choice, his doctrine of the mean lends itself quite easily to the conception of a sort of father confessor to be referred to on all occasions concerning every detail of conduct, in a way that would result in relatively hard and fast rules of right conduct emanating from such authority. If, on the other hand, Aristotle meant to stress the fact that the mean or middle way is entirely with reference to ourselves, the result might be so wide a variety of conceptions of the middle path that there would be no common qualities at all in the virtues of various people. His more considered opinion would seem to be a compromise between these two interpretations. Each mean or middle way must relate to some individual, and to some extent the discovery and choice of this way must lie in the hands of that individual himself. A person need not, however, rely solely upon his own experience and judgement, and, in fact, it is unwise for him to do so. Young people and children, in particular, should trust the practical wisdom and prudence of older people; and education and training are designed to supply such influence. The older and more experienced a man becomes, however, the more his own judgement, itself, may be expected to display the wise or prudent way, and to this extent he can discover in his own judgement the judgement of the prudent man.

THE NATURE OF PRUDENCE OR PRACTICAL WISDOM

As in the case of his theory of virtue, Aristotle's theory of *phronêsis* is easily capable of being misunderstood. Since this theory is an intrinsic feature of his conception of virtue, we must now raise the question of its meaning. In this case, also, the word may have several renderings in English. Peters⁵ renders it as "prudence," and Ross⁶ as "practical wisdom." This difference is obviously crucial. In English, "prudence" tends to refer to a cautious, wary, or even over-calculating mode of living. The ideal of prudent living seems attractive directly in proportion to our troubles and fears, and inversely in proportion to our avoidance of these. As Aristotle says, happiness appears to the sick man to be health, to the poverty-stricken to be wealth, to the ignorant to be "grand things that are beyond their comprehension." Now, it is true that virtue, according to Aristotle, concerns the passions and, for the most part, the avoidance of extremes in reference to them. To this extent, the judge of what is virtuous conduct is the man who is prudent in precisely the sense that the English word suggests. When Aristotle tells us that the man who possesses the intellectual virtue of prudence will, by means of it, be able to achieve all of the other virtues, he means unmistakably the man who is cautious enough and calculating enough merely to avoid all evil extremes. In relation, then, to virtues as habits of experiencing passions, prudence is the characteristic of mind that enables us to live well.

If, however, we remember that the virtuous life is in Aristotle's opinion only one phase of the most nearly complete life, the life of happiness, *phronêsis* would seem to mean something more positive than prudence; namely, practical wisdom. With reference to the virtues, practical wisdom is indeed roughly equivalent to prudence; with reference to the wider

⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Peters' translation, Kegan Paul, 1881, pp. 46-47.

⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Ross' translation, Clarendon, 1925, 1107a, line 2.

features of well-doing and well-being, including love, friendship, and statecraft the two are different.

Aristotle's theory of practical wisdom denotes, then, in relation to the virtues, a developed power of judgement concerning the right mean with reference to the appetites and passions, and the ability to discover the proper ways for prudently realizing that middle path in conduct. In connection with the wider problems of living, it means the same power, no longer directed solely towards the problems of the passions and appetites, but towards wider ends and goals, and the means of attaining these. These descriptions may be adopted as a general conception of wisdom in the conduct of life. The application of this conception to certain specific problems in human living will occupy us in subsequent chapters.

VIRTUE AND THE WIDER ENDS OF LIFE

If Aristotle's theory of ethics began and ended with his account of virtue, it would remain in some ways as narrow a conception of the subject as the various theories of the good which we have examined. For in spite of what is possibly a rather adequate description of the nature and generating conditions of virtue, his description is, in the last analysis, of the kind of good man who is not concerned with any specific problems of conduct, or who, at best, is concerned with a certain very restricted kind of problem, the proper mastery and expression of the passions. While not so rigid a description of the good as, for instance, hedonism, this theory of the virtues is a theory of goodness. It is the merit of Aristotle's position, however, that he does not restrict his study to the problems of virtue. In his treatment of the various ends of human living, he raises the question of the relative merits of enjoyment, honour, and virtue or excellence. He says that enjoyment is the end of the masses of men who "show themselves utterly slavish in their preference for the life of brute beasts." Honour, on the other hand, is the usual aim of the politician,

but it involves to a large extent a dependence upon the persons who are in a position to distribute political favours. Moreover, politicians frequently pursue honour "in order that they may be assured of their own virtue or excellence," which indicates that they hold virtue or excellence to be superior to honour. Therefore, Aristotle concludes, neither enjoyment nor honour is the most desirable or complete end of human living.

What does he say, in this connection, about virtue? Can moral excellence or virtue be considered to be the most nearly complete end?

But virtue or excellence also appears too incomplete to be what we want; for it seems that a man might have virtue and yet be asleep or be inactive all his life, and, moreover, might meet with the greatest disasters and misfortunes; and no one would maintain that such a man is happy, except for argument's sake.⁷

The most nearly complete or happy life, the main features of which it is Aristotle's aim to describe, cannot be considered to be merely a life of virtue.

What are the other aims of human living besides virtue? Aristotle mentions the aims of the various sciences, practical and theoretical, such as medicine or astronomy. There are also such ends as wealth, flutes and the whole class of musical instruments, the ends of such skills and crafts as saddle-making, horsemanship, shipbuilding, navigation, etc. Furthermore, there are the ends of the productive arts such as literature, sculpture, and music. All these ends are to be considered as quite incommensurate with virtue, neither precluding it nor necessarily involving it. On the other hand, there are certain other important ends that necessarily involve virtue and yet a great deal besides. Chief among these are unselfish love or friendship, leisure, material goods, and justice in political life. Each of these ends is intimately related to virtue, but not identical with

⁷ Aristotle, *op. cit.*, Peters' translation, Kegan Paul, 1881, Book I, 5, 6; *cf.*, Book X, 6, 2.

it. A truly virtuous man will require friends and relatives to whom he may be devoted. He cannot be a slave or a man who is in such financial condition that he must devote his life exclusively to the problem of earning a living. He requires a certain social standing and a due amount of external goods. The grander his plan of life, the greater the amount of material possessions that are necessary. For most people the exercise of virtue will require financial independence and the advantages of possessing servants and slave labour. These benefits are essential to leisure, and without leisure a full life is impossible.

In addition, virtuous living presupposes a condition of economic stability and prosperity in the city-state sufficient to make available a full measure of goods and services, and to guarantee justice. Widespread virtue in group living is justice in the broadest sense of the term. Justice is essential to the virtuous life of the individual citizen. In addition, there are special kinds of justice dealing with a fair price and distribution of goods, fair methods of trading, the proper punishment of civil offences, and the correct chastisement of criminals, each of which kind of justice is also an end additional to individual virtue. Finally, wise laws, a capable army, and rule by a virtuous group of citizens are other important ends. Like individual virtue, none of these various ends is, however, the most inclusive goal of wise living in either individual or civil life. Each of them, in addition to being an end, is also a means to a still wider end, the full and ultimately happy life (*eudæmonia*) of the individual and the community. This end of ends also includes virtue, but it is no more synonymous with virtue than with a host of other lesser ends, such as enjoyment, honour, courage, etc. What is the relation of virtue to this widest of all ends?

HAPPINESS AS THE MOST INCLUSIVE END

As in the case of other words, Aristotle's term *eudæmonia* is difficult to render exactly in English. It is usually translated as

"happiness." While we shall adopt this translation, the student must be cautioned at the outset that it involves a certain element of distortion. In uncritical conversation, the terms "pleasure" and "happiness" are frequently used interchangeably. "I am very pleased to see you; I am very happy to see you." "The children derived great pleasure or amusement or happiness from their new toys." This identity of meaning is so widespread that Bentham and Mill openly ground their hedonism upon the doctrine of "the greatest *happiness* of the greatest number." In opposition to this identification of pleasure and happiness, Aristotle holds that pleasure is an accompaniment or a result of the attainment of any goal, whether major or minor. Every passion, he asserts, is closely bound up with pleasure and pain, although it does not have pleasure as the end sought or pain as the end avoided. Pleasure may be a matter of the moment. It may be the result equally of drinking a glass of wine, the kindness of a friend, or the realization of a full life wisely lived. Unlike pleasure, happiness (*eudaimonia*) is not a matter of a moment or even of a few years, but if experienced at all it is the outcome of a full span of years of well-being and well-doing. It is dependent upon many things, the chief of which is virtue. Therefore a person cannot say, in Aristotle's terminology, that he is happy because of the taste of dinner, or because someone has come to pay a call.

Furthermore, Aristotle holds that happiness is not a condition at all, but an activity. Since we quite commonly consider a man happy when he is in a passive condition or state of being, we are again in danger of misunderstanding Aristotle. There would be some advantage in referring to happiness as "living well and doing well."⁸ This end is not the only one which

⁸ Formally Aristotle's view involves the following dilemma: If happiness is equivalent to doing well and living well, his theory is tautological, for it means merely that the aim of doing well and living well is doing well and living well.

This difficulty vanishes in an ethics of situations. In the consideration of conduct it is never merely tautology to say that doing well and living well is an end in itself. Only a formalistic ethics would reject Aristotle's theory of happiness on such grounds.

human beings seek. Medicine has, as its end, health; ship-building has ships; some people seek pleasure; some honour; some virtue. The most nearly complete end does not eliminate or replace these lesser ends. It is merely more inclusive than they, in the sense that they are always sought not merely as desirable in themselves, but, in addition, as a means to happiness. The final end must be considered, therefore, as only one end among others, and not one which is set over all the rest. The ends and aims of human conduct are as various as the characters and careers of individuals and the situations in which they conduct themselves badly or well. While each and every end may be considered in a wider perspective as a means to happiness, yet in narrower contexts these ends are sought for their own sakes. These contexts are merely less nearly complete or inclusive in scope. There are manifold goods or values which permeate every feature of the total ethical situation—happiness is merely a synthesis of them all.

A man's happiness is, therefore, identical with his total life of living well and doing well. It is the "exercise of his faculties in accordance with excellence or virtue, or, if there be more than one [excellence or virtue], with the one which is the best and most complete. . . ." ⁹ Is not, then, happiness the same thing as virtue? Not at all. Virtue is a habit or trained disposition to choose, while happiness is the exercise of all of our faculties in accordance with this habit. Virtue is a settled disposition to act in a certain way, happiness is the exercise of our faculties in accordance with that settled disposition. Even so, does not virtue necessarily lead to happiness, and does not happiness necessarily flow from virtue? Not at all. While it is true that without virtue a man cannot, in the opinion of Aristotle, be happy, it does not follow that a virtuous man will necessarily be happy. The settled disposition of character which is virtue or excellence is the result of training and practice, but happiness requires the active exercise of virtue or excellence in conduct.

⁹ Aristotle, *op. cit.*, Book I, 7, 15.

Now, conduct depends upon circumstances, means, and occasions—in a word, upon a host of conditions over which the virtuous man may have no control. Furthermore, happiness requires the continual and permanent practice of virtue or excellence. In other words, happiness requires a full span of years. A child cannot be happy. But in a long life, circumstances will have many opportunities to intervene and upset the kind of activity of life that constitutes happiness. Not merely virtue is required for a happy life, but also favourable external conditions and a suitable amount of external goods. “Both perfect excellence, or virtue, and perfection of external circumstances are needed for happiness. For our circumstances are liable to many changes and to all sorts of chances, and it is possible that he who is now most prosperous will in his old age meet with great disasters, as is told of Priam in the tales of the heroes; and a man who is thus used by fortune and comes to a miserable end cannot be called happy.”¹⁰ While the truly happy man will not be rendered miserable by most of the slings and darts of outrageous fortune, nevertheless there are some circumstances which will diminish the happiness of even the wisest man. “The truly happy man will not be moved from his happiness easily, nor by any ordinary misfortunes, but only by many heavy ones. . . .” Yet by some sorrows even the wisest man may be unnerved. The test of a happy life comes, therefore, not at the beginning or in the middle but at the end, or possibly after death.

We shall meet all objections, then, if we say that a happy man is “one who exercises his faculties in accordance with perfect excellence, being duly furnished with external goods, not for any chance time, but for a full term of years”; to which perhaps we should add, “and who shall continue to live so, and shall die as he lived,” since the future is veiled to us, but happiness we take to be the end and in all ways perfectly final or complete.¹¹

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, Book I, 9, 10-11.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, Book I, 10, 15.

In addition to virtue, therefore, the happy man will require other things. He will need friends towards whom he can direct his devotion and his virtuous conduct. He will require the kind of training which only a plan of wise education can give. He will require the kind of protection and justice which only a well-ordered political state can make possible. He will require a sufficiency of external goods, as well as labour and services of various kinds to supply these goods in an effective manner; and Aristotle included slave labour, although he mentioned the possibility of some work being done by machines. He will require leisure for the pursuits of scientific study, philosophical contemplation, and enjoyment of art objects, music, and literature, as well as for the exercise of virtue. Therefore the happy man is necessarily virtuous, but the virtuous man may not be happy. In many ways, his happiness is in perpetual danger of being lost. As Faust says in a slightly different connection:

Sorrow nestles deep in the heart
 Creating deep secret pain.
 Restlessly moving about, disturbing all calm,
 She takes on new masks continually.
 She may appear as house and home, as wife and child,
 As fire, water, steel, and poison;
 You shudder before all that doesn't turn out well,
 And what you cannot lose, you must continue to lament.

THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE AS THE HAPPIEST

Precisely because the happiness of the virtuous man is subject to a complex number of elements beyond his control, Aristotle holds that the life of practical wisdom is only the second best; that is, the one which is next to the happiest. The happiest life is the one that is as little dependent upon external goods and relations as possible. The life of speculative wisdom comes nearest to fulfilling all of the conditions of happiness. Contemplation can be carried on more continuously than any

other activity (remembering that sleep and the nutritive processes are not activities). Contemplation is most self-sufficient, most leisurely, and most inexhaustible. Therefore a speculative life for "a complete term of days" represents the complete happiness of man. Such a life, Aristotle admits, is beyond the reach of most people. Indeed, to the extent that we achieve it, we do so because of something in us more divine than human. The fact that such a life is the happiest does not mean that the life of moral virtue and wisdom in conduct is not an extremely happy one. It is merely less certain and less continuous. For most people, this second highest type of life is the most important one. Most people have greater reason to hope for some measure of happiness in a life of wise conduct than in a life of speculation.

HAPPINESS AND DEATH

Aside from his contention that the life of the gods consists in contemplation, Aristotle does not raise the question of the possibility of human life after death. In his discussion of happiness, however, he considers the question of whether we may say that the dead are happy. Since a person's happiness at any time in his life is to some extent determined by external circumstances, if we try to call a man happy at any one time we forget that no matter how nearly complete his life has been up to that point, his apparent happiness may be suddenly shattered by some completely unforeseen stroke of fortune in a way that will make our judgement turn out to be quite false. For this reason we are constrained to wait until late in a man's life before judging him to be happy or unhappy.

Are we, then, to call no man happy as long as he lives, but to wait for the end, as Solon said? And, supposing we have to allow this, do we mean that he actually is happy after he is dead? Surely this is absurd, especially for us who say that happiness is a kind of activity or life.¹²

¹² *Op. cit.*, Book I, 10, 1.

Is a man entirely "beyond the reach of evil and calamity" after his death? For students of Aristotle who are anxious to detect a belief in immortality in his views, this question may be taken as evidence that he was concerned with a life after death, in spite of his specific reference elsewhere to the desire for immortality as a wish for an impossibility. In any event, Aristotle was concerned here with a different question. He mentions two examples of ways in which a man's happiness may be increased or diminished after death: "Honours [may be] rendered him, or the reverse of these, and again the prosperity or the misfortune of his children and all his descendants." These examples show that Aristotle is still treating the problems of virtue and conduct. Elsewhere he suggests that a man may be responsible for a deed issuing from an unbreakable habit, not because the man could have done otherwise at the time, but because he was responsible for the initial choices which led to the hardening of the habit. Therefore, in the cases of the virtues, a man's responsibility for an act may lie in his past life a considerable time prior to the actual commission of the act. A murderer is more to be blamed for originally allowing himself to be dominated unduly by his rage, rather than for the unbridled expression of his habit of rage on the occasion of the crime. Similarly, a man may have done noble deeds a considerable time before his death, without being honoured for them during his lifetime. If happiness were only a conscious experience, the man who is honoured after his death will experience no happiness (assuming Aristotle to mean that man is mortal). Yet his happiness, his total life of well-doing and well-living, with all its effects, carries over beyond his death in such a way that he obtains an honour although already dead. Can we not say, Aristotle asks, that his happiness has been increased? Similarly, consider a man who has committed a series of crimes which have remained hidden from the world until after his death. Can we not say that the discovery of those crimes and the resulting disgrace quite definitely diminish his happiness?

These questions will seem meaningless to the student who has forgotten our caution concerning the unprecise translation of *eudaemonia* as "happiness."

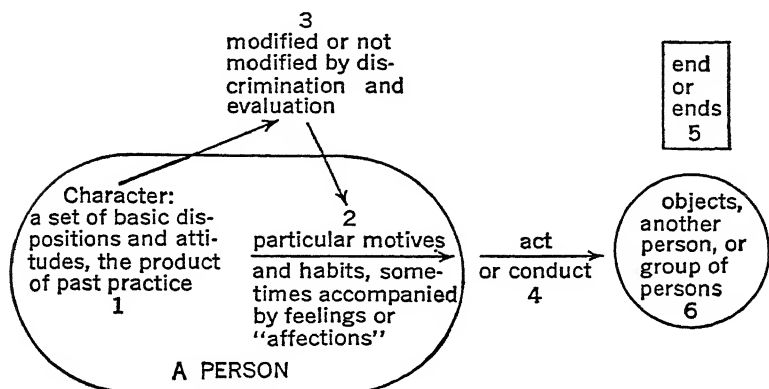
Even more crucially, would not the prosperity or the misfortune of a man's children after his death quite definitely increase or decrease his happiness? This question suggests that Aristotle was more concerned with the "inner" values of parental devotion than his relatively impersonal discussion of friendship would indicate. Let us assume that a man has laboured diligently to aid his child in the practice of virtue, as well as to provide medical care, food, clothing, a home, etc. Suppose that after the man's death the child should develop into a criminal. Would not this unforeseen event be a definite stroke of misfortune which the father when alive would have admitted to be no less terrible merely because destined to occur after he is himself dead and apparently beyond good and evil?

Aristotle admits that a limit must be set somewhere to these speculations, since our major concern is conduct. Some of a man's descendants are less immediately related to him than others, and it would indeed be strange "if the dead man were to change and become happy and miserable by turns" as each and every one of his multitude of descendants prospered or suffered. Although Aristotle leaves this problem with nothing more said, it sheds an interesting light on his extremely wide conception of happiness. Applied in the political arena, should we say that the happiness of M. Clemenceau, bound up so closely with the welfare of France, has remained entirely unaffected by the resurgence of Germany after his death, merely because he is unable to *feel* affected by it? To understand Aristotle's conception of happiness as the end of wise living, we must not think of any feeling of pleasure, but must consider a man's aims and achievements over a full span of years. Much of his conduct produces effects extending beyond his death. To this degree, conditions after his death affect his happiness.

B. The Idea of Wisdom in Conduct

THE TOTAL ETHICAL SITUATION

Ethics is concerned with every phase of the practice of human living: The character of a particular person, his motives and habits, his feelings or "affections," his processes of discrimination and evaluation, his acts or deeds, the ends or goals which he is seeking, and the objects and other persons affected by his deeds. All of these elements, inextricably woven together, constitute the total ethical situation.



The Total Ethical Situation

In the first place, all conduct proceeds from a set of basic dispositions, more or less developed, and called "character." Human beings are born without character, either good or bad; they possess, however, from childhood the capacity for character. It is as natural for a child to be potentially a virtuous man as it is for an acorn to be potentially an oak. Without training and practice, the "settled disposition" to act in a certain way, which later constitutes a man's character, remains, however, as unreal as the branches and leaves of an oak which has not yet sprung from the ground. Precisely what human character is, can no more be judged from any "innate" qualities of a man

than the nature of an oak can be found in the present chemical composition of an acorn.

The second element in the total ethical situation is the specific set of motives and habits expressed by the character at the moment of any particular deed, act, or piece of conduct. Frequently these factors operate directly upon conduct, with no accompanying emotions, feelings, or "affections." When, however, these basic motives and attitudes are promoted or hindered, the emotions manifest themselves. Many habits and motives are closely bound up with the physical and physiological organization of the person. Some of them, notably the nutritive functions, are completely beyond the control of the person's will. Others are the product of past training and practice, and, while not themselves rational processes, are amenable to reason—discrimination and choice—and may operate in harmony with, or in opposition to, a person's processes of reflection and deliberation. In childhood, feelings are not yet the outcome of character, but the subsequently developed character will frequently express them in one manner or another. Therefore many attitudes, motives, and feelings are, at the outset, expressed neither rightly nor wrongly, yet in and through the guidance of their modes of expression there will eventually emerge in practice the kind of attitudes and emotions which express or reveal character or a settled disposition towards conduct.

The third important component part of the total ethical situation includes the processes of discrimination, evaluation, and choice. These elements we have described briefly above, and have equated, roughly, with a certain sort of reasoning process.¹³ Discrimination is the ability to notice differences among various sets of competing alternatives. Evaluation implies this capacity, as well as the power of imagination opening up wider ranges of objects and paths and revealing likenesses as well. There is as great a chance that a child will develop none of these processes

¹³ Cf. above, pp. 7-10, 48-54.

at all, or the kind of distorted reasoning powers which directs the criminal type of man away from virtuous and wise living, as that an acorn will not take root, or that it will grow into a twisted and deformed tree. This rational "side" of a man is as natural as his various sets of motives, habits, and their accompanying emotions.

The fourth element in the total ethical situation is the person's act or deed. A person's conduct consists most specifically of what he does. While conduct is never entirely divorced from the other elements of the ethical situation, it centres most directly in a world of physical objects in which human beings have their common existence. For example, stabbing someone with a knife is a piece of conduct comprising a great deal more than the contact of the blade and the throat, but the conduct centres in this deed.

Deeds give to the ethical situation a definite temporal dimension. What a person has done in the past has a specific bearing upon what he is doing in the present, and both in turn have important relations to the future. The task of building and altering human character, motives, dispositions, and emotions begins and ends with specific pieces of conduct, performed in the past and capable of being performed again. The kinds of actions which a man finds himself carrying out or prone to carry out in the present are the materials of conduct. With present tendencies all reflective evaluation must begin.

In the fifth place, all conduct concerns a search for ends or goals, and a selection of the most appropriate and effective means towards these ends. The specific nature of a series of deeds gains meaning partly in relation to the end or goal towards which they point. Packing a travelling bag, boarding a taxicab, and catching a train are not three isolated acts. They may all point towards the end of taking a vacation trip. Packing the bag is a means to taking the cab; taking the cab is a means to catching the train; and riding on the train is a means to reaching a winter resort. A large portion of the search for

wisdom in conduct consists of examining the nature of the ends or aims or goals towards which specific deeds point, appraising these goals as desirable or undesirable in the light of the situation as a whole, and selecting the effective means for reaching the chosen ends.

Lastly, although conduct proceeds in every case from a human person, it takes place in a world of objects, other persons, and groups of persons. Among the most important repercussions of almost every deed is the series of effects—predictable or unpredictable, intended or unintended—upon other persons. This implies that among the factors which careful discrimination and imagination must consider, in appraising an act as wise or foolish, is the effect of the deed upon other human beings. Hetty Sorrel, smiling at Arthur Donnithorne,¹⁴ did not even remotely envisage the terrible train of consequences coming in the wake of that smile and culminating in the death of her illegitimate child. A large sector of the search for wisdom in personal life, as well as almost the whole of social ethics, is concerned with an attempt to consider the effects of individual conduct upon other persons and groups.

Each of these six elements of the total ethical situation is so intimately bound up with all the others that no adequate description of any one of them is possible without reference to the rest—that is, except by reference to the situation considered as a whole. Even a complete description of these six factors as they operate at any one time in the life of an individual is an artificial abstraction if the past is ignored. Past practice, habits, attitudes, and feelings play upon, and to some extent influence, the present. Furthermore, the future cannot be overlooked in explaining the present. Motives and feelings, whether or not modified by deliberation, point towards future, envisaged and not yet realized ends. These not-yet-achieved ends draw a person's present conduct towards them and leave their mark upon his present character, his feelings and "affections," as well

¹⁴ George Eliot, *Adam Bede*.

as upon the objects and persons within the compass of his present acts.

WISDOM IN CONDUCT DESCRIBED

Wisdom in conduct is the habitual application to conduct of the fruits of knowing, discriminating, and evaluating, and this over a full span of years. This kind of wisdom is essentially an individual, positive thing, won only through careful thought and knowledge, and through persistent practice over a considerable period of time. It is not something which the seers can express in a few principles, and pass on to their disciples. It is related to every feature of the total ethical situation. He who slowly acquires wisdom in conduct will come to have an inner life, *i.e.*, a kind of virtue or excellence of character, expressing itself in certain types of motives, feelings, and habits. He will base his conduct upon careful discrimination and evaluation, bearing in mind his own fund of past experience, as well as the teachings of the great ethical thinkers. He will not, however, treat these teachings as formal recipes or absolute rules indubitably right and mechanically applicable to every person and every situation. On the contrary, he will subject the ethical precepts of various wise men to careful analysis in the light of particular situations.

Furthermore, the person who aims at wisdom in conduct will direct his deeds towards various ends. He will not, however, point his entire course towards any single end, such as pleasure, self-expression, power, or tranquillity. He will notice the large number of goals of positive worth which deserve to be sought, as well as the many negative ends (evils) which ought to be avoided. Among these various ends, he will recognize the place and importance of externals, such as health, food, clothing, shelter, etc. He will be aware of his obligation to aid other persons to possess a satisfactory share of these material goods, as well as other more general benefits of civilized living. He will recognize that his own inward excellence, and the welfare of his family or friends, ought not to be purchased at the cost of

an entire neglect, on his part, of the welfare of wider groups of persons. In general, he will remember that his deeds affect the lives and well-being of other people, and he will modify his conduct in the light of this fact. Above all, the idea of wisdom in conduct stresses the necessity of application and practice. The wise man will carry out in deeds the fruits of his careful evaluations and choices, and he will do so habitually over his full span of life.

The idea of wisdom in conduct integrates the motives of the four one-sided conceptions of ethics which we have examined. Right rules cannot be expected to supply a clue to all problems of living, but some rules will turn out to include much wisdom within particular contexts. For example, Kant enjoins us to treat human nature as an end and never as a means. This advice provides an important criterion for deciding many problems of living. Similarly, theories of the good, while presenting a decidedly narrow conception of ethics as a whole, take their place as descriptions of many major ends or goals which human beings in certain circumstances actually seek, and ought to seek. For example, while pleasures are not the sole ends of human living, nevertheless among the manifold ends which people seek, and ought to seek, pleasure has its place. Furthermore, the inward spiritual life is not the sole locus of ethical value, yet among the important elements in a wise life is the development of an inner life of moral excellence. The person who aims at wise conduct does not stand aloof from all active living in the political and social arena, yet equally little does he neglect the life of inward excellence. Many of the problem-situations with which we shall deal have their central locus in the character of a person. Finally, although the group-life, particularly the public group-life, of human beings is not the sole locus of ethical value, many problems of central ethical importance concern the welfare of wide groups of persons.

VIRTUE AS THE SOURCE OF WISE CONDUCT

Since virtue or moral excellence is not a condition or state but a settled disposition to act in a certain way, it is at once the instigator of conduct towards envisaged goals or ends, and the product of such conduct in the past. Yet only in the former capacity can it be described, for although a person's present character is the result of past deeds, it manifests itself in the present only in present deeds. The inner life which is identical with moral excellence or its opposite reveals itself only in its outwardly directed motives, passions, and "affections," and its deliberations concerning these. A person *is* what he *does* not because character *per se* is illusory, but because even the most settled disposition has become and remains what it is only by means of what the person has done, is doing, and is prone to do. A person is virtuous not merely because he is prone not to do what would make him lacking in virtue, but because what he is prone to do is in conformity with what his past discrimination and evaluation have shown to be worth doing and doing habitually. Moral excellence is at once an end in itself and a means to other choice-worthy ends. Unlike hedonism, the ethics of wisdom in conduct implies the belief that moral excellence is valuable for its own sake, provided we remember that such excellence is not an inward state only, but the inner life passing over into deeds, and revealing itself through them.

MOTIVES AND PASSIONS AS THE VEHICLES OF WISE CONDUCT

To Aristotle belongs the credit of noticing that motives and feelings rather than reason are the basic ingredients of virtue.¹⁵

¹⁵ "Speaking generally, it is not the case, as the rest of the world think, that reason is the principle and guide to virtue, but rather the feelings. For there must first be produced in us (as indeed is the case) an irrational impulse to the right, and then later on reason must put the question to the vote and decide it. One may see this from the case of children and those who live without reason. For in these, apart from reason, there spring up, first, impulses of the feelings towards right, and reason supervening later and giving its vote the same way is the cause of right action. But if they have received from reason the principle that leads to right, the feelings do not necessarily follow and consent thereto, but often oppose it. Wherefore a right disposition of the feelings seems to be the principle that leads to

Moral excellence is not knowledge, not even the critical sort of self-knowledge which Socrates advocated and practised. While the unexamined life is not fit for human living, the kind of life that *is* fit for human living is not a life consisting entirely of critical reasoning. Self-examination, the critical appraisal of ends and careful deliberation concerning means, is a necessary adjunct to moral excellence. Virtue, while not constituted by knowledge, implies it. Virtue is itself a certain disposition of the feelings or passions, acquired by practice. A small child may have unguided impulses towards the expression of passions. These impulses are never indicative of moral excellence or its opposite, but merely of a capacity for the one or the other. Practice begins to turn these impulses into specific channels or modes of expression. This process is the formation of character. Character is at once the product of past practice and a disposition towards future conduct of the same sort. Character is strengthened and fortified, bent or broken, by the types of channels into which the passions become habitually directed. The basic attitudes of a person provide an important clue at once to his inward excellence or the opposite, and also to the nature of his deeds. A physician who accidentally prescribes a poison and kills his patient is full of sorrow, remorse, and repentance, as soon as he learns of his mistake. Not so with the criminal who deliberately poisons a person. The offending physician was ignorant merely of the particular means which he employed in causing the death. The criminal knew full well what the result of his specific act would be, but was blind to the evil nature of such acts in general. The absence of sorrow reveals his lack of moral excellence.

DISCRIMINATION AND IMAGINATION AS THE CHARTS OF
WISE CONDUCT

If the development of character and basic dispositions were the entirely mechanical result of past experiences and conduct,

virtue rather than the reason." Aristotle, *Magna Moralia*, translated by Stock, in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. by W. D. Ross, Vol. IX, Clarendon, 1915, 1206b, Lines 16-29. By permission of the publishers.

the appearance of a morally excellent character would be entirely beyond the control of the individual. If, in turn, all new ethical problem-situations merely evoked automatic "responses," expressive only of what the person's character and basic dispositions happened to be at the time, all wise and foolish conduct would be entirely a fated or predestined affair. Now, much modern psychological investigation points precisely to such an automatic account of the nature of human behaviour. On the other hand, the assumption of the ethics of wise conduct is that in some cases of conduct the basic dispositions and motives do not pass over immediately into deeds, but are held up pending the operation of discrimination and imagination.¹⁶ Among the elements of the total situation are the various alternative goals towards or away from which conduct may proceed. Discrimination is not merely the ability of a human being to notice the differences between a pair of alternative goals, but also the capacity to judge which is worthy of choice or avoidance, *i.e.*, the ability to grasp the actual values in the various alternative things, paths of conduct, modes of living, etc. Even more important, imagination plays like a searchlight around and beyond the alternative goals or ends, revealing new, different alternatives, and noticing likenesses between various things, persons, and ways of life. These two processes of mind—discrimination and imagination—together constitute the function of evaluation, upon which rests the possibility of choice in conduct. Evaluation makes possible a modification of the initial impulses, motives, and passions. Consciousness, as Professor Fite says, can make a difference. Discrimination and imagination are the charts of wise living.

APPLICATION AND PRACTICE AS THE ESSENCE OF WISE CONDUCT

The essence of wise conduct, however, is not virtue, or feelings, or evaluation, but rather the application of the products of evaluation to present deeds. Practice is the keynote of the

¹⁶ Cf. below, pp. 407-13.

ethics of wisdom in conduct. Only by practice can a person become what he subsequently discovers to be virtuous; only by practice can the kind of disposition which he knows to be virtuous become a part of his nature. The application of the fruits of discrimination and evaluation in the arena of deeds is the sole manner in which conduct stands any chance of becoming wise.

Practice has two aspects: It tends to be an expression of a person's already developed sets of motives and basic dispositions, yet it is also the means by which future character is determined. Therefore, unless present practice embodies the fruits of present reflection, a person by his present behaviour or misbehaviour merely hardens, strengthens, and fortifies those tendencies which are already uppermost in his nature. If these are on the whole wise tendencies, present practice will increase the chances of an ultimately developed virtuous character. If, however, these present tendencies are on the whole foolish, present practice will make any future alteration of his disposition all the more difficult. In either case, the only manner in which his character may become effectively altered is by bringing to bear upon present practice the fruits of present evaluation. In the case of the criminal or the drug addict this type of change in character can be brought about only with the active co-operation of others, if at all.

The application of the products of knowledge and evaluation to conduct requires in every case a considerable period of time. Merely occasional application and practice never indicate wisdom in conduct. The lives of human beings extend over a number of years. No young man can point to his past life as an example of wisdom in conduct so long as a sufficient period of time lies ahead of him to allow a complete reversal of his mode of living. Time can bring with it many changes. Nor can a young man's uninterrupted days of careless behaviour be taken as an indubitable sign that his entire life will be a foolish one. Prince Hal carousing in a tavern in Eastcheap hardly

appeared to have in his character the capacity for becoming a wise ruler. Many a young man, unawakened to the ambitions and responsibilities which life may ultimately bring with it, appears to be totally devoid of the make-up of a wise man, only to do a complete about-face when confronted with new and different conditions. Therefore the test of a wise life comes at the end and not at the beginning or midway. Wisdom in conduct is the habitual application to conduct of the fruits of knowing, discriminating, and evaluating, and this over a full span of years.

NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE VALUES AS THE ENDS OF WISE CONDUCT

Wise conduct proceeds, therefore, from moral excellence as its source, and operates through the motives and passions as its vehicle. In addition, it is directed towards ends. Some of these ends are negative in the sense that conduct aims away from them as evils; others are positive because conduct points towards them as goods. Some ends are rooted primarily in personal living; others chiefly in group life. All such ends we shall now call "values."

Values are the most general features of ethical situations. In addition to the specific ends towards which the deliberations, passions, and deeds of a man point, and in the search for which his inner character expresses itself, these very deliberations, passions, motives, and deeds, as well as his character itself, are themselves values. Moral excellence is a good (positive value); its opposite an evil (negative value). Deliberations, motives, passions, and deeds are themselves good or bad.

If ethics were primarily a search for a very general sort of wisdom in conduct identical in the lives of all men, the chief task of the study would be to find the single sort of good life which all persons ought to strive to live, as well as the unique sets of motives and passions bound up with that one kind of life. In this event, sets of specific virtues could be listed, based upon the more or less identical nature of all men. These deeds,

attitudes, and virtues could then be taken to be the values which constitute wise living. In the practice of life, however, few human beings are in a position to turn their exclusive, or even chief, attention to the search for such general sets of values. Not everyone has a sufficient amount of external goods to allow a major preoccupation with the guidance of the general human passions and with the search for such Aristotelian virtues as bravery, temperance, liberality, and the like. The values which most people can pursue in practice are usually closely bound up with the kinds of ends which their station and mode of life force them to seek, and give them some reasonable hope of attaining. In other words, the goals which most people can pursue in conduct are linked with specific situations. Consequently the application of wisdom to conduct, for most people, consists in the search for specific ends or values. For this reason the ethics of wise living is primarily an ethics of situations determined by the specific values for which individuals and groups can and ought to strive.

THE ETHICS OF SITUATIONS

Ethical situations may be divided into four general types, depending upon whether the values or goals involved are negative or positive, and whether they centre primarily in personal or group life.

The personal lives of many persons are severely restricted by the necessity for preventing or remedying specific evils which they have encountered or are in danger of encountering. Such values as backwardness in childhood, poverty, sickness, failure in a career, legal difficulties, insanity, and death have the common quality of being unwanted. Many persons find themselves facing these evils either in prospect or in fact. Wise living for these persons must be not merely a careful concern with the problems more or less common to all men, but also a prudent attempt effectively to prevent these specific, undesirable conditions, to remedy them if they have appeared, or to make the

best of them if they are irremediable. The search of an individual for the prevention or remedy of some evil in his own personal life and that of his family and immediate circle of friends may be called a negative ethical situation in personal life.

Other persons, free from such difficulties, find themselves concerned in their private lives with the search for childhood play, education, a suitable and effective vocation, some of the manifold ends of married life, friendship, leisure, etc. Ethical wisdom, without becoming a coat of many colours, necessarily involves the attempt to act with insight and discrimination in the pursuit of these many positive ends which are valuable for their own sake, and not as a means to the prevention or remedy of anything. Moral excellence in the Aristotelian sense of a settled habit of choosing the mean or middle way with reference to certain passions is a *sine qua non* of the wise pursuit of these positive ends. A wise man's character must express, however, an equally developed tendency—in some ways considerably more difficult to achieve—to act habitually in conformity with the results of careful evaluation in a search for these additional, more complex ends. The virtue of a father, husband, or friend must at least involve general moral excellence; in addition it must include a much wider type of wisdom carrying over into an active effort to attain the many goals and values implicit in these specific relations. The search of a person for the achievement of some goal of positive worth in his personal life may be called a positive ethical situation in personal life.

Some people more directly, and all people indirectly, are concerned with the many evils which beset the various groups of which they are members. A citizen who has attained the more general Aristotelian type of virtue with regard to his own motives and passions, and who has even achieved an excellent and effective character in regard to the above-mentioned situations, negative and positive, in his own life, but who is ignorant of, or dead to, the needs of his community, has missed the wider

implications of ethical living. Wisdom in conduct in our modern world must involve an active cognizance of group evils, and a most persistent and discriminating effort to prevent and remedy them. While most citizens, of necessity, remain chiefly concerned with the many pressing problems in their own lives, many of them can, and should, become aware of these wider group needs, while some of them can, and ought to, seek the kind of moral excellence involving the practice of group meliorism of one sort or another. Group poverty, unemployment, a lack of adequate community medical care, the misuses of modern industry, crime, feeble-mindedness, insanity, and war can be classified, without widespread contradiction, as evils. All of these negative values represent challenges to those individuals and communities that are seeking the kind of wisdom which passes over into conduct. As in individual life, a settled habit on the part of a community to take the necessary preventive and remedial measures in relation to negative values is not easily achieved or retained. Only an extremely narrow conception of ethics would ignore these problems solely on the grounds that they concern a public group, or because they are exclusively preventive and remedial. Collectively if not individually, the wise community will develop the kind of character which occupies itself with a fair distribution of wealth, effective modes of work-relief, group medical care, labour legislation, adequate types of social security, the sterilization of the hereditarily feeble-minded, the limitation of armaments, etc. For many individuals in a community, wisdom in conduct will represent an almost exclusive preoccupation with these group matters. The search of a group of individuals for the prevention or remedy of some evil in their public, community life may be called a negative ethical situation in group life.

Finally, even in group life, wisdom in conduct will not represent merely a concern with the prevention and remedy of evils. Following the lead of that eminent student of wise living, Con-

fucius, communities should strive for the best and most effective type of government, the kind most compatible with a happy life for as many citizens as possible. In addition, the wise community will use the tools of modern industry to make available to the largest number of people the due amount of external benefits and goods which in Aristotle's time was inevitably the lot of the few. Likewise, group wisdom involves the use of such modern educational agencies as schools, the press, and the radio to assure the widest and freest spread of information, knowledge, and learning. Lastly, in churches, communities have agencies which can be made the source of a widespread love of, and desire for, wisdom in the conduct of life, whether or not these agencies can, in addition, point the way to Heaven. Many citizens cannot be concerned with the search for group wisdom in these various ways; but, as in the case of group evils, the search for positive group values should be the major concern in the lives of some people. For these people, wisdom in personal life will be attained chiefly in and through an active participation in government, industry, journalism, education, church work, etc. The search of a group of individuals for the achievement of some goal of positive worth in their public, community life may be called a positive ethical situation in group life.

A person who devotes his mind, his energy, and his passions to an attempt to eliminate various evils and to achieve many goods in his own life, in the lives of persons he loves, and in the community, and who pursues these ends as loyally as his capacities and his station allow, may be said to have lived a valuable life. To the extent that an individual or a society is forced to concern itself entirely with matters of prevention and remedy, the wisdom of its life becomes of necessity roughly identical with prudence. Prudent conduct merely re-creates, restores, or preserves values antecedently existing or normally existing in the life of a person or group. Prudence is wisdom, but only of a rather circumscribed sort. On the other hand, to the extent that an individual or society is able, in addition, to strive

for more positive goals, the wisdom of its life outstrips its prudence in scope and extent. Such wisdom in conduct creates or discovers or realizes values which are new in the lives of the person or group, values which were not antecedently existing, or even normally supposed to exist, in their lives. Such values are created either merely in prospect or perhaps also in fact. With moral excellence as its source, the motives and passions as its vehicles, discrimination and imagination as its chart, wise conduct aims at or away from values, positive or negative. No one of these aspects of the total ethical situation can be considered as entirely separated from the others.

Part Two: Application

CHAPTER VIII

TYPES OF NEGATIVE SITUATIONS IN PERSONAL LIFE

EVILS IN PERSONAL LIFE

THE search of an individual for the prevention or remedy of some evil in his own personal life and that of his family or immediate circle of friends is a negative ethical situation in personal life. Yet not all evils are of equal importance. Poverty is a negative situation, but so is a toothache. Evils which are more likely to have markedly harmful effects upon a person's total life of well-being and well-doing should be considered to be particularly fraught with ethical implications.

Now, in any particular person's life it is quite difficult to say that any specific evil is apt to arise. Indeed, some people lead lives that are relatively free from serious troubles. On the other hand, few persons are fortunate enough to be able to devote their total energy to a search for exclusively positive goals. For most persons, life is apt to require a considerable measure of activity along preventive or remedial lines. Which particular negative problems a person is likely to face will depend upon countless factors and circumstances peculiar to his life. In spite of this fact, certain evils are sufficiently widespread in the lives of men to justify a selection of these as types of negative ethical situations in personal life. The student must be reminded that the importance of these problems in the lives of many persons in no way implies that he or any other specific individual is in particular danger of encountering the evils involved.

In the case of each of the problem-situations to which we shall now turn, there are two general questions which must be borne in mind: (1) Why is the situation ethical, *i.e.*, in what way does it have important repercussions upon the character and lives of individuals? (2) In what specific ways can wisdom

be applied to the solution of the difficulty, *i.e.*, to the prevention of the evil if it is merely threatening, or to its remedy if it is already present?

THE BACKWARD CHILD

Since the normal, healthy growth of the mind and body of a child is a prerequisite of all future character development, any mental or physical handicaps under which a child may suffer raise a barrier to a life of wise conduct. Therefore the problem of the backward or retarded child constitutes a major negative ethical situation.

William James described the world of a newborn baby as a buzzing confusion of sensations. In the earliest months of life the sole task of the infant is alternately to sleep and eat. Probably the earliest sensations which become familiar are those associated with touch and hearing. Considerably later the eyes are used, and at first their attention is caught only by moving objects. Since adults move about the baby more than any inanimate things, it is not surprising that the first objects which a baby "looks at" are human beings. Precisely when a child first "recognizes" anything it is difficult to say, but probably it is considerably later than the appearance of habits of "response" to a sensation of the thing.

The passage from babyhood to childhood is very gradual. Learning to sit, crawl, stand, and walk follow successively during the first two years of life. A relatively long period of time is required to learn these skills in comparison with the time required by animals, puppies, kittens, colts, etc., even allowing for the shorter number of years that animals live. Indeed, the initial helplessness of a human baby in comparison with young animals is a striking difference between them. The young puppy is on its feet a few days after birth, and soon running actively about; the human baby usually requires more than a year to learn to stand. If a visitor from Mars were to judge the two species solely in the light of this difference, dogs would prob-

ably be considered to be a more advanced form of life than men. Probably a child's years of complete dependence upon adults leave an important mark upon its mind.

The most striking development of a young baby is the beginning of speech in the second or third year. Whatever significance is attached to the ability of human beings later to form "ideas," to think, and be conscious, language is at first as automatic as learning to stand. A child uses words long before they have any meaning for him whatsoever. The utility of these words is discovered later, and their meaning still later. The task of the physician, parent, and nurse is to watch over the entire physical and mental development of the child and to assure its uninterrupted continuance. The dangers of babyhood from which every infant should be protected are never understood by the child until long after they are past.

A child becomes a backward child imperceptibly. If there were no other children to compare him with, the fact that he is backward would either not be discovered at all, or, at best, much later in life. If Robinson Crusoe had had a child with him on his island, that child could not have been known to be backward, normal, or precocious. If, however, Johnny is talking at fourteen months, most of his friends at two years, and Jimmy not until he is almost four, it is safe to say that Johnny is exceptional, the others are, roughly, normal, and Jimmy is backward if not definitely defective.

In very early years, relatively little can be done to aid a backward child. His physical health ought to be promoted and his environment made as pleasant and as stimulating as possible, but time alone will reveal the extent of his deficiencies, and the need of further specific remedial measures. If, however, a child continues to lag markedly behind the normal type, efforts should be made to determine the extent of his handicaps. Various psychological tests are designed to determine a person's capacity to learn, *i.e.*, in general, his ability to make use of his experience. These tests yield some indication of a person's power of mem-

ory, his ability to make deductions, his facility in perceiving relationships (for example, between geometrical figures), his knowledge of language, the extent of his vocabulary, and other similar capacities. The integrated result of these tests shows a person's mental maturity, a conception which is then divided by his actual age in order to compute his general intelligence. Although these figures must be considered as fairly rough, a normal person has an intelligence quotient of between 90 and 110. Dull normal children have a quotient of from 80 to 90. Border-line cases fall between 70 and 80. Feeble-minded persons have a quotient of less than 70. The dull normal persons and persons on the border line stand possibly as good a chance of successfully earning a living as normal persons. The problem of these backward persons is to learn to mix with other people and to gain some measure of manual skill, enough for becoming a janitor, a driver, a charwoman, or the like. In some communities, special educational classes are formed to aid these people to make their way in the world. Since feeble-minded persons with intelligence quotients of less than 70 form so small a percentage of a community, the problem of taking care of them is chiefly a matter for group ethics.¹

THE UNSOCIAL CHILD

Among the basic dispositions which constitute a person's character, one which is quite likely to influence the general course of his life is his attitude towards other people. Most people spend a major portion of their lives dealing with their fellows in one way or another. The ability to be at ease with other people, to co-operate with them, and to take part in various group activities, is much more readily acquired or developed by some people than by others. Whether a person develops a social or an unsocial temperament is often determined by his childhood experiences.

An unsocial child is not necessarily lacking in ability. A child

¹ Cf. below, pp. 348-49.

who is perhaps quite active and alert, walking, talking, and playing when he is alone or with his nurse, may become quite timid and fearful in the presence of new faces. A certain amount of reticence is quite normal, but in extreme and persisting cases the task of removing timidity becomes a difficult one. A child's future character is influenced to a considerable degree by the way in which he learns or fails to learn to be at ease with other people. Many accidental factors may enter in and determine the process. Possibly a small difference in age, one way or the other, on the part of other children will be decisive. If a naturally timid child finds himself forced to the side lines in a game played by slightly older children, this fact may accentuate his initial tendency to remain alone; while if a naturally self-assertive child finds himself with younger ones the result may be to stimulate his tendency to lead. The child of ten who has retired into himself is probably in many cases the product of a series of such accidental influences.

There are two general attitudes which may be taken towards a child with unsocial tendencies. According to one view, reticence and timidity are looked upon as a handicap unmixed with any compensating factors. The child is destined to live in a world requiring the kind of training which school gives and the kind of sociability developed by relations with his school-fellows. Therefore, whatever other qualities and abilities he may possess, they should not be allowed to prevent him from learning how to associate with his fellows. Maladjustment, the failure to establish a normal and natural relation to his social environment, is the evil above all to be feared; and almost everything else in schooling is to be subordinated to its prevention.

Following this theory, the parent, nurse, or teacher tries unwaveringly to persuade the child to play with others, encouraging it to gain self-confidence by performing various skills with a group of children. To achieve this end, the child is sent at the age of three or four to pre-kindergarten play groups. Special

nurses are sometimes brought in to guide the play of the child. Smaller children are invited to play games in which the child will have the greatest chance of excelling, and gaining thereby a basis for pride and self-confidence.

An opposing theory holds that excessive reticence on the part of a child is not an unmixed evil. The comparison between young children and young animals shows that the period of initial, prolonged helplessness of human beings is the criterion of a subsequent complexity of development. There is no assurance that the same comparison does not hold to some extent between two children. Excessive reticence on the part of a child may foreshadow types of later development of character and mind of which the more socially inclined child is incapable. While backwardness is an indication of genuine incapability, timidity may mean quite the reverse. Many qualities and abilities in human nature cannot be submitted to a common standard, and consequently it is quite difficult to evaluate them. It may be a grave mistake, according to this view, to try to eliminate too quickly the unsocial qualities of a child. By apparently changing him to a normal type, much may be lost in the way of individuality, imaginativeness, or even intelligence.

POVERTY

The prevention or remedy of poverty is among the most important goals which some individuals are forced to seek. Every excellent influence which may have gone into the formation of a person's character—family life, schooling, the pursuit of a vocation, etc.—disintegrates and vanishes in the face of conditions of severe material want. Moral excellence easily becomes a mere phrase in the lives of persons who fall into poverty. Even merely threatening indigence, if continued long enough, blights a person's whole point of view, and cuts him off from every chance of wisdom in conduct.

Poverty is closely bound up with many other evils from which individuals seek to escape. Sickness, unemployment, legal diffi-

culties, crime, and even insanity are in many cases closely connected with the difficulties of poverty. Furthermore, the conditions of poverty are not always the same in every individual case and every community. Where there is a high standard of living, the cost of commodities, food, clothing, shelter, etc., may be correspondingly high, and poverty will include people with proportionately more money and other goods. A person's habits of living, the amount and kind of goods to which he has accustomed himself, are likely to affect his attitude towards poverty. If a man who has had an income large enough to enable him to own a large home is forced to live in a small cottage, he is apt to *feel* that he has been reduced to poverty. A man whose fortune has dwindled from ten million to two million dollars may bewail his lot and cry out that he will die in poverty. With such cases of "psychological" poverty we are not concerned.

In general, poverty means the possession of no material goods at all, or of so few that adequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical care are lacking. This condition is an evil which most individuals are anxious to prevent or to overcome. Prudent political leaders, economists, and group meliorists seek to prevent and remedy this situation in the life of wider groups.

The main causes of poverty lie, in many cases, completely beyond the control of any specific, poor individual; he is able to do nothing to alter the general economic, political, and social conditions which affect him. *His* problem is not to establish more prosperous economic conditions for the community, to work out a system of work-relief, a dole, or wider and more effective social agencies, but solely to prevent or remedy his *own* poverty. His problem is affected by two factors, his own needs and the extent of his means to satisfy them. The nature of his needs is determined by the number of persons dependent upon him, the cost of living in his particular locality, and the condition of his health and that of his dependents. If John Smith is a young, healthy, single man living in a climate which is mild throughout the year, his needs are small in comparison

to those of William Jones who is an old, sick man, with a large family, living in a locality in which the winters are severe. The former requires less food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention, although he may be in a position to command a greater amount of each of these. On the other hand, the second factor determining poverty is the extent of a person's means to satisfy his needs, however great or small the latter may be. This ability is, in many cases, so completely determined by the economic and social conditions of the group in which the poor man lives, that he is quite helpless. In many countries, persons are unemployed through no fault of their own, and fall into the most hopeless and permanent poverty.

The only legal means which a poor man may adopt to get food, clothing, or shelter is to put himself and his family into the hands of private charity, or to seek some kind of governmental aid. In countries in which these channels of support are open to him, they provide the only prudent means of alleviating his distress. When even these channels of assistance are closed, what shall the starving man do? Is he justified in stealing food? This question does not admit of an easy solution. Systems of laws in communities have as two avowed aims the preservation of the life of the citizens and the protection of their property. Confucius believed that in a just state there will be some distinctions of wealth, but these differences will not be allowed to become too great. When one man has caviar and another lacks bread, the acts of the second man are not to be judged too rigidly according to standards which are quite right for a man with a full stomach. Just as a confession extorted by means of torture may be honestly repudiated later, so the stigma attaching to theft by a starving man is considerably different from the wrongness of ordinary stealing. Any society which allows large numbers of honest citizens to face the choice between stealing or starving cannot expect the choice to be made in conformity with a prudent and wise respect for law. While the theft is no less wrong because of the extenuating circum-

stances, this consideration inevitably becomes inoperative in the face of extreme want. A poor man ought not to steal, yet his respect for property may be expected to give way when the right to live is itself at stake.

Some ethical theorists, notably the Marxists, hold that in countries in which there is private enterprise the poor man ought to join the working-class revolution. The prudence of this advice is bound up with the general adequacy or inadequacy of the Marxists' wider theories, which we have already examined.² While we rejected those theories as undemonstrated and one-sided, one of the conditions which might very well operate to give them truth and effectiveness would be an increasing amount of uncared-for distress among the poor of a country.

The problem of the prevention, as opposed to the remedy, of poverty is on the whole closely tied up with the general problems of the economic well-being of a community. Yet there are a few considerations which an individual might have in mind in regard to the avoidance of poverty for himself and his family. In the first place, in some professions and trades the remunerative years come earlier in life than in others. Some trades require men who are strong and young, and an older man may find himself unable to hold a job, although many years of life lie ahead of him. If a young man has any choice in the matter he might select a profession with an eye upon the number of years in which it will provide him with an income. Likewise, a person may seek a profession in which old-age pensions are available. Also, a man with an income may be able to lay aside a sum of money "against a rainy day." Among the various forms of savings are (1) money itself; (2) savings in a bank; and (3) an annuity payable in old age. However, in the cases of persons with families, the desire to achieve a secure old age is frequently at odds with an even stronger wish to provide

² Cf. above, pp. 156-61.

adequate present care for the family, sufficient education for the children, and a fund of life insurance.

The security of all forms of savings depends upon the wider economic conditions in the community. Extreme inflation of currency—such as Germany experienced after the 1914-1918 war—would reduce all savings to nothing overnight. Even mild inflation may reduce the purchasing power of money. To avoid this danger, a man with an income may purchase property, land, a house, and the like, as well as the stocks of business enterprises possessing property, coal, oil, machinery, etc. This type of saving is a safeguard against poverty in precisely the opposite fashion from money. The danger to these investments comes from deflation—the increased value of money, the collapse of property values, and the stagnation of business enterprise.

ILLNESS

Illnesses and diseases have an important relation to the art of wise living, both because of pronounced alterations in conduct which they may bring about, and because sometimes physical disorders are the results of a person's mode of life. Although a person's physical organization does not constitute his character, many basic attitudes and dispositions are intimately related to a person's general physical condition. Some fools are healthy, and some wise men quite sickly, yet for most people physical health is a valuable basis upon which character may rest.

The first experiences of illness come in childhood. In the past, a fatalistic attitude was taken towards such childhood diseases as whooping cough, measles, and the like, the assumption being that these were evils which a child must experience. The more recent tendency has been to attempt to prevent even such illnesses by means of inoculation. The effectiveness in rendering a child immune is admittedly relative, but, in some cases, it is considered to be quite high. In the cases of more serious diseases, diphtheria and smallpox, vaccination is imperative. When

it is realized that only a generation or so ago epidemics of diphtheria were known to wipe out whole families, the importance of preventive inoculation or, if the disease has appeared, of the remedial use of antitoxin, is obvious. Furthermore, there seems no reason, apart from prejudice, why a child should not receive a Wassermann test for syphilis, however sure his physician and parents may be that he is free of the disease.

Against some major diseases there are few known preventive measures. For example, infantile paralysis, tuberculosis, pneumonia, or cancer may appear in persons who hitherto seemed to be quite healthy. Probably proper food, sunlight, exercise, and rest, as well as periodic general examinations by physicians constitute the only general precautions against these and some other types of disorders. In the cases of the venereal diseases—syphilis and gonorrhoea—prevention lies entirely in the hands of the healthy individual. Only if human beings could exercise no control over their sexual impulses would exposure to these diseases be unavoidable. A recognition of this fact is no guarantee that a person will apply his knowledge to his conduct. Marriage, including fidelity, is a chief way of avoiding these evils, yet to marry mainly for any negative motive, including this one, is not necessarily wise.

There are illnesses and diseases ranging from a common cold and other simple ailments to such serious disorders as tuberculosis and infantile paralysis, cancer, and the chronic degenerative diseases of the heart and kidneys. Under what conditions should a person consult a physician? There are minor complaints in which no medical care is needed; there are other cases in which treatment is clearly imperative. Some apparently minor troubles turn out to spring from something quite important which can be detected only by a medical man. While medical attention is the prudent method in many cases of illness, many people are able to live a long and healthy life without consulting the medical profession. When Tolstoi launches

a bitter attack upon doctors and points to his own long, healthy life as an example of a man's being able to live without medical aid, we are merely confronted with an individual who has a strong constitution, and who (happily for him) has been free from serious infections and illnesses during his whole life. Yet not everyone who avoids physicians will escape disease or live long. Tolstoi's partial truth is a dangerous one precisely because with medical attention some people would have been able to recover from an illness but could not and did not recover without it. On the other hand, no profession is composed only of competent members, and physicians make mistakes. In some cases the medical treatment causes more serious illness than the original trouble. No conscientious physician believes that he is infallible or that he has an unbroken record of successful cures, but we should not expect the profession to be too forward in publishing its list of failures.

In cases of serious illness, the problem arises of whether a physician should tell the patient the precise degree of his trouble, or whether he should colour the facts favourably in order to keep the morale of the sick person as high as possible. In some cases, the morale of the patient would be in no way impaired by his knowing the facts, and by frankness the physician would gain a certain advantage in the way of an increased confidence on the part of the patient. In other cases, the very nature of the disorder is such that every cause of excitement and worry must be avoided. In these cases a certain amount of deception may be prudent. In this event, the physician should not forget the story of the boy who cried wolf. If a patient once begins to suspect that a physician is telling him what he thinks he ought to hear rather than the facts, he may not believe the physician when he tells him, and wants him to know, the truth. In this matter the physician might remember William James' distinction between "tough-minded" and "tender-minded" people. The former would be more capable of facing

the facts than the latter. When the facts are pleasant the question does not arise.

There is also the problem of the effect of a long period of helpless invalidism upon the outlook and attitude of a person. Epicurus said that in some long illnesses there is a greater amount of pleasure than of pain. However questionable this assertion may be, two effects are apt to become marked upon a semi-permanent invalid. In the first place, he may achieve a fairly comfortable, or at least satisfactory, adjustment to a sick-room, hospital-ward, or to hospital life in general. His habits and energy become directed to an environment quite different from the outside world, and yet to one which he is planning to leave eventually. The more he becomes at home in the hospital atmosphere, the greater becomes the danger that a readjustment to the outside world will become impossible. His problem is twofold. Not only must he follow a rigid system of life in order to become cured, but he must then, in addition, face the problem of readapting himself to the kind of life which he hopes to be able to lead. The problems of wise living bound up with illness do not end when the patient is pronounced cured. They may even be just beginning.

A second effect of a life of prolonged invalidism is still more significant. During a period of months or even years, a patient is not merely adjusting himself to the life of a sick-room, but also keeping in mind chiefly or exclusively a single goal, health. This goal is by its very nature remedial. His chief or sole aim is and must be to reachieve a condition which in and for itself is no accomplishment at all—namely, health. He has been forced for months or years to dwell upon the one question: Am I ill or well? The habit of asking this question is not easily broken. It certainly does not come suddenly to an end, upon a person's return to normal living. The imprint of such "escapist" thinking upon the mind may have become so indelible that a person spends his entire life dwelling unduly upon his health. Now, some and possibly considerable concern for health

is prudent and necessary after a serious illness. Some people must think of their health a great deal during the rest of life. But the habit of being concerned with health carries over in many cases far beyond the point at which such thoughts serve any useful purpose; in fact, over to the point where they become detrimental because of their preponderantly preventive tendency. A man who escaped illness for seventy years would hardly want this fact carved on his tombstone as the record of a very important achievement.

BIRTH CONTROL

The negative situations of poverty and illness sometimes bring with them another problem of great ethical significance; namely, the question of the practice of birth control. This issue is of considerable importance in many families because of the effect of the decision upon the lives of the parents. In every case, however, the problem of birth control is of paramount ethical importance because a new life, potentially wise or foolish, happy or miserable, hangs in the balance. This problem must be considered in three different aspects: (1) Is birth control prudent in the case of a poverty-stricken family? (2) Is it prudent in cases in which childbirth would jeopardize the health, or even the life, of the mother and the newborn child? (3) Is it prudent in families in which neither of these two conditions obtains? Let us consider these issues successively.

Some students of ethics, confident that they know the one right way for dealing with practically all matters of conduct, believe that birth control is wrong, even in families which are hopelessly sunk in poverty. This practice, they contend, is out of harmony with the laws of nature and the decrees of God. The inner welfare of the soul requires that even poor persons either refrain from sexual relations or run the risk of having children, however inadequately the latter will, of necessity, be cared for. Now, the motives back of this idea do not deserve to be belittled. Nevertheless, those people who are quite

convinced that birth control is wrong should ponder the manifold problems of material (no less than spiritual) welfare which will inevitably confront a child who is born to indigent parents—the chances of inadequate food, clothing, shelter, and medicine, during his childhood, and the resulting harmful effects upon his health and character. While there is no right rule for everybody in this matter, and not even for every poor family, the desirability of birth control for many poor families should not be overlooked.

In families, whether poor or rich, in which the health of the wife is bad, the problem is slightly different. The moralist who believes birth control to be absolutely wrong maintains that in cases in which the health or even the life of the wife and child would be jeopardized by childbirth, the family ought not to practise birth control, but an abstinence from sexual relations. Now, in some cases this view is correct. The health of some wives is so weak that there ought to be neither childbirth nor sexual relations. In such case, the physician orders the cessation of sexual relations, and his command must be obeyed. The ethical problem arises, however, in cases in which the physician decides that childbirth would be dangerous, but that sexual relations would not be harmful. Would birth control under these circumstances be wrong? In contending that it is wrong, the dogmatic moralist makes two assumptions: (1) Chastity in marriage can and ought to be the rule of married life, except when children are desired; (2) sexual intercourse under any other conditions involves a trivial preoccupation with sensuality. Both of these contentions elevate a partial truth into a rule which is dogmatic and untrue. (1) Chastity can and ought to be at times the way of married life, yet there is no reason why this way should be departed from only when children are specifically desired. (2) While in some cases sexual intercourse without the desire for children may involve an undue preoccupation with sensuality, this is not always, or even most of the time, the case. When the health of the wife

permits sexual intercourse, and yet makes childbirth imprudent, there is no clear reason why intercourse is wrong. Its wisdom will depend upon other factors in the marriage—spiritual and sensual—with which we have yet to deal.³

Would the practice of birth control be justified in families in which there is no poverty and in which the health of the wife is good? Some people avoid having children because of a fear of undertaking the responsibilities of parenthood. Others do so because of a belief that the economic circumstances of the family do not permit the additional burden; they fear that the family budget is too small to give children the kind of advantages deemed necessary. Still others believe that the career of the husband or wife or of both imposes too great a demand upon the attention of the husband and wife to leave time for the care of children. Other people are, simply, too occupied in a life of pleasure of one sort or another to want to have children. These same reasons, or some of them, may cause a married couple with children to seek to avoid having more.

Many families which practise birth control for one or more of these reasons may be making a great mistake. Perhaps the husband and wife who seek to escape the responsibilities of parenthood would be immeasurably happier if forced to undertake the very obligations which they fear. Like a person afraid of a plunge into cold water, they may be blind to the beneficial effects of the challenges of parenthood. Perhaps the economic condition of the family in no way warrants avoiding having children. The career of the husband or the wife or both might remain unimpaired, or even gain new and added meaning, by the presence of a child; and perhaps even the decision to abandon one of the careers in the interest of a child would be wise. Possibly the search for personal pleasure by the husband and wife would become prudently tempered by the necessity of considering the welfare of a child. In general, the husband and wife may have fallen into a way of life that is unduly prudent

³ Cf. below, pp. 312-20.

and cautious, or too self-centred, and perhaps the joys and responsibilities of parenthood would awaken them to a deeper and wiser attitude.

On the other hand, some of the reasons for desiring to remain childless may be quite wise—the outcome of a careful discrimination between the values actually lying in the competing alternatives. In some families, the husband and wife may be in many ways quite unfit to assume the responsibilities of parenthood. In some cases, the economic status of a family, even if considerably above the border line of poverty, may be inadequate to make possible a proper care of children. In other families, the demands of the career of the husband or wife or both are perhaps sufficiently important and all-absorbing to justify birth control. In general, there may be many reasons which warrant the decision on the part of a married couple to remain childless, or to restrict the size of the family.

Even in those cases in which families practise birth control for foolish reasons, their conduct is not, in an unqualified sense, wrong. They have a right to miss the values of parenthood or to limit the size of their families if they so desire. They have a right to seek the alternative values which they believe to entail a lack of children, if they wish to do so. Mistaken evaluation, if carried out as responsibly as possible, is never on a par with uncritical obedience to a fixed formula. For the person who makes a foolish evaluation today, wisdom may be possible tomorrow or later in life. But the person who renounces at the outset the faculty of discrimination and choice abandons the very foundation of ethical living. Even when the uncritical acceptance of a fixed rule happens to lead a person the wise way, the resulting values in his life are accidental, and likely to be temporary. When, in addition, the rule leads to harmful consequences—the death of his wife in childbirth, poverty and illness for his large family, etc.—the situation is even more pitiful.

FAILURE IN A CAREER

Unlike the various evils already treated, failure in a career is closely linked with a goal of positive worth. A successful vocation is an important ethical aim because of its many happy effects upon the character, outlook, and general well-being of an individual. In a sense, failure is simply the other face of this positive situation. By striving for any goal, a person runs the risk of failure. Therefore, since wisdom in conduct implies a search for many goals, the person who seeks to live wisely is likely to fail in more things than a person who strives for relatively little. Vocational failure is an evil of particular significance for most people, however, because their material well-being, including possibly that of a family, is apt to be involved.

For some people, failure in a career is synonymous with an immediate fall into poverty. For wealthy persons, on the other hand, failure is not likely to mean a very great alteration in their mode of living, or to present any particularly pressing problems. Neither in the lives of the very poor nor of the rich is the failure *per se* a major issue; in the former case, the ensuing poverty overshadows all other matters; in the latter, no career at all is necessary.

When the failure itself is the evil which an individual is attempting to avoid, the problem is partly related to that intangible condition of mind called confidence, morale, or belief in one's self. For some persons, failure is a challenge, an impetus to put forth greater efforts, a spur to new ambition. For others, it operates in precisely the reverse fashion, destroying self-confidence, weakening all effort, and even decreasing the amount of ability already present. Closely connected with the question of morale is what Havelock Ellis calls "Bovarism," the tendency of Gustave Flaubert's heroine to believe herself to be better than she really was. A man who has failed may tend to blame other people—his employer, his colleagues—or

the machinations of certain hostile people. He may blame special circumstances, an illness, a trying climate, over-long hours, or the demands of his family and friends. In a word, he may tend to explain his failure—to himself and others—in every way except by blaming himself and his own lack of ability or effort. Or, again, he may exhibit a tendency which is the precise opposite of "Bovarism," the tendency to overblame himself, to become unduly self-critical, dejected, and depressed. His morale and self-confidence may drop to a vanishing point. To what extent should a person face the facts, however discouraging, even at the risk of a lowered morale, and to what extent should self-knowledge be sacrificed to self-confidence?

Failure in a career is an evil of a limited extent, particularly in the case of a young person. For a young man to lose heart because of a lack of achievement is highly foolish, not only because time may rectify matters in one way or another, but also because no young person can be stamped a failure with any degree of finality. Time alone can yield the criteria of success or failure, and the particular profession or trade (or even school system) which has passed a negative judgement upon a person may have gravely erred. Only on the assumption that this one particular evil (*viz.*, failure) is supremely important would it follow that a man (young or old) cannot recognize his professional limitations and continue to value himself. Although vocational success is for most people a major, positive goal of conduct, the mere avoidance of an evil is not a criterion of a full or wise life. At the end of life, a man who had merely avoided failure in his career could not be said to have achieved very much even in the career. There are some goals in human life which are worth choosing for their own sakes, and which are independent of all questions of professional success or failure. Among these are the study of science, the appreciation of art, and the search for wisdom in general. Even in practical life, there are many values incommensurate with the question of vocational achievement—friendship, family life, and political

activity. If a person realizes the comparative importance of various values, theoretical and practical, his morale or self-confidence will not depend exclusively upon the extent of his professional success. Naturally, none of these considerations is valid, if failure means poverty also.

LEGAL DIFFICULTIES

Much of the conduct of life in a civilized community is carried on within the framework of law, the body of enacted or customary rules recognized by a community as binding upon conduct. The two main classes of legal cases are usually called civil and criminal; namely, suits between individuals, and the prosecution of an individual by the state. In the first type, a person has suffered some injury at the hands of another, but no offence has been committed against the community as a whole. Civil legal action is the means by which the injured person may gain some kind of compensation from the offender, but the latter is not otherwise punishable, unless his conduct has been, in addition, criminal—that is, unless it has harmed the state or the community as a whole. Important types of civil cases are suits to recover for damages received in an accident, suits to collect unpaid debts, suits concerning property, and divorce suits. In civil suits the chances of the injured to collect damages are limited by the power of the offender to pay. In criminal cases, either by custom or by specific statutes, certain types of acts are pronounced to be offences against the whole community and to involve prescribed punishments. If these offences are relatively minor in character, they are called misdemeanours; if they are more serious, they are felonies. The difference between a misdemeanour and a felony is determined solely by the extent of the prescribed punishment. Important types of misdemeanours are petty larceny (stealing small sums), assault and battery without intention to kill, and trespass. Leading types of felonies are murder, assault with intention to kill, grand larceny (stealing of large sums), embezzlement (the

misuse of funds in a person's possession), arson, rape, and kidnapping.

In spite of the intimate relation between law and many positive types of human conduct, every actual legal case is primarily preventive and remedial. The courts will not render general opinions concerning the implications of a law, but will deal only with some actual case arising under it. For example, in 1935 the United States Supreme Court did not decide the nature of the right of businesses in general to be free from governmental rule under the National Recovery Act, but considered the case of a specific poultry company owned by the Schechter family. While, in the past, legal cases in England and the United States arose only after some harm had actually been done, more recently this procedure has been supplemented by certain forms of preventive suits.

At common [largely judge-made] law there could be no action in the absence of actual injury—someone must have been hurt. Thus parties were forced to commit overt acts in order to have the courts adjudicate their rights. The common law courts offered remedies and curatives, but looked with a disdainful eye upon what may be termed “preventatives” or “prophylactics.” This doctrine was a fitting part of the legal philosophy of our ancestors, but the spirit of the modern age looks askance at such useless, unreasonable, and costly restrictions on the usefulness of our courts. The idea has been steadily gaining ground that the courts should operate as preventive clinics as well as hospitals for the injured.⁴

Under declaratory judgement statutes, both in England and in the United States, the right is given to a person to petition a court for relief from some impending injury, without waiting for the occurrence of any overt act.

To the extent that problems of conduct fall within the scope of a law, their ethical implications become at least co-extensive with their legal ones. The rules of law must be recognized as carrying with them a type of coerciveness lacking in the cases

⁴ *Virginia Code*, Sec. 6140 n., 1936.

of many other sorts of regulation. Is the power of laws and legal machinery over the conduct of an individual an unqualified good? Is a person justified in breaking a foolish law? These questions take us beyond the realm of personal ethics to the problem of the nature of governmental machinery,⁵ yet in some measure this question must be considered in relation to individual conduct. In general, there are three theories of the nature of legal coercion: (1) The authoritarian conception of law, as defended, for example, by Thomas Hobbes, holds that both the making and the enforcing of law lie in the hands of the sovereign. Whatever the laws may be, the citizen is helpless to change them, and his obedience must be unequivocal. (2) The anarchical view of law—as stated, for example, by Tolstoi—contends that laws and legal machinery are bad in an unqualified sense, and should be resisted by the good man. Both of these views are one-sided and inadequate. In opposition to both of them is (3) the theory of law implied in the American Bill of Rights, and in the general nature of constitutional government, which holds that laws flow, in the last analysis, from the consent of the governed.

Each citizen, therefore, has the right to strive actively to secure the enactment of wise laws, the change of existing laws, and the repeal of foolish ones. This right implies a retention by the individual citizen of the full powers of discrimination and evaluation in relation to any law. On the other hand, the right to seek to obtain the alteration or repeal of an existing law is quite different from the right to violate a law merely because it is or seems to be foolish. Only an anarchist would contend that a person has a right to break laws at his own discretion. If a body of laws is unduly tyrannical, citizens may revolt in order to change them, but under constitutional government there are means of altering laws without resorting to revolution. The individual who tries to justify his personal violation of a foolish law thereby opens the door for his fellow

⁵ Cf. below, pp. 363-75.

citizens to justify, on the same grounds, their violation of a wise law. In almost every case, the prudent course for an individual is to obey even a foolish law, while actively striving to secure its amendment or abolition by legal means. The general body of civil and criminal laws protect, on the whole, so many valuable rights and advantages for all individuals, that no one person is justified in breaking them. When a specific law is oppressive there will always be in a wise society a legal way of ending the tyranny. To resort to any other method, while always a last possibility, is to risk the loss of the many goods and benefits which legal procedures assure. While the right to guide the making of laws should lie in the last analysis in the hands of the citizenry, the right to enforce them must lie in the governmental machinery.

Every individual faces the danger of encountering legal difficulties in one way or another. He may discover that his community has adopted some foolish, tyrannical law. He may find (1) that he has been injured by some private person, and must have recourse to a civil suit to obtain compensation; (2) that he has injured someone else, and is being made the defendant of a civil suit; (3) that he has been the object of some crime; (4) that he has himself foolishly committed a criminal act. The first three possibilities may arise quite accidentally and unavoidably, and the sole ethical problem consists of relatively practical steps to cope with them. Certain types of insurance policies are designed to protect a person against accidental injury which he may suffer or may inflict upon others. As long as human beings live in a world in which moths destroy and rust corrupts, and thieves break through, and some men are vile, the danger of being harmed by criminals will remain. Probably fame and wealth increase the chances that a person will become the object of crime; yet the wise man will not abandon a search for these goods merely because they entail some risk of evil and suffering.

The danger that a person himself will commit a crime is

more fraught with ethical implications. Just as we can never be quite sure where the disease of cancer will strike next, so we can never be absolutely certain that a person with the best of upbringing will not quite unpredictably act in a way that is not only ethically imprudent and foolish, but criminally wrong. Aristotle held that a man's conduct must be viewed not merely in relation to a specific act which he has performed possibly under the stress of particular circumstances—for example, a hot-tempered murder or manslaughter—but also in the light of the set of developed habitual tendencies which lie behind that act. For the act he may be completely inculpable, yet he may be blameworthy and punishable for allowing certain earlier incidental tendencies towards anger to gain a foothold in his habits. The prudent man will beware of making habitual the types of feelings and desires which may pass over into criminal acts.

DIVORCE

Married life is a typical positive ethical situation involving primarily values which are worth seeking for their own sakes and not as a means of avoidance of anything. Divorce, on the other hand, is a typical preventive and remedial end. By seeking it, a person admits that for reasons wise or foolish he desires to abandon a major human relation (or set of relations), and to retrace his steps to the place at which he was before marriage. While, therefore, marriage envisages new aims and goals and involves the search for new values in the life of a person, divorce merely seeks to avoid present or threatening evils, to re-create old values, whatever may be a person's additional plans for living after the separation. Since so much is at stake in character, goods, and human relations, both marriage and divorce require the most careful discrimination and evaluation.

Is divorce ever right and prudent? The most conservative answer to this question holds that all divorce is wrong. The most radical view holds, on the contrary, that any divorce is right if the partners desire it. In fact, however, both of these

views fail to take into account the complexity of the situation. For some persons the absence of an authoritative prohibition of divorce leads to a flippant attitude towards marriage and its responsibilities. If we two cannot get along together, we can easily separate and change partners. For such people authoritative rules may indeed lead to a deeper and wiser conception of marriage. On the other hand, such a successful marriage is purchased at the cost of the very basis of ethical life—individual discrimination, evaluation, and choice. The same serious sense of the nature of marriage ought, if possible, to be achieved in the far more difficult and responsible way of seeing how great are the values, spiritual and otherwise, which a happy marriage brings with it, and freely choosing it for this reason. By the same line of reasoning, it may be argued that the avoidance of divorce because of the spectre of authority may indeed preserve much richness in married life. It purchases such values, however, at the price of the very ethical processes which can and ought to yield them.

Assuming, however, that there are serious and challenging reasons for divorce involving much more than caprice or the mere wish to separate on the part of husband, wife, or both, under what conditions is this step prudent? The usual reasons accepted by law—sterility, adultery, disease, cruelty (mental or physical)—frequently grow out of conditions which could have been anticipated before the marriage, if the suffering partner had been able to gain sufficient knowledge about his prospective mate. Yet this kind of knowledge presupposes a degree of insight which young people can hardly be expected frequently to possess, and a so-called "trial marriage" all too readily becomes simply an excuse for sexual relations of a trivial sort.

Consider the case of sterility and the consequent lack of children, as a ground for divorce. However important the rôle of children may be in family life, is the absence of children *ipso facto* a reason for wanting a divorce? May we not wonder

how much meaning there would be even in a marriage *with* children, if their absence automatically causes a desire for separation? If the aims of a marriage are centred so exclusively upon the desire for children, may we not even question the amount of intelligence back of that desire? Furthermore, present-day knowledge of medicine shows us that sterility is a highly relative condition. Also, there is the possibility of adopting a child.

Where adultery is the cause, the situation is considerably more complex. Such a relatively radical theorist as Bertrand Russell sees in adultery no particular cause for divorce; while the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States and the general laws of England recognize it as almost the only ground for action. Probably the conservative view comes closest to an understanding of the facts of human nature in this regard. While there are doubtless "advanced" persons who have sufficiently oriented their thinking and feeling to the acceptance of adultery, particularly occasional adultery, and more particularly adultery on the part of the husband, as not incompatible with a relatively permanent and stable marriage, the instincts and feelings of most people point in the opposite direction. Probably for most people the fact of adultery, or at least that fact plus the implications of spiritual infidelity, is one of the strongest and most justifiable grounds for divorce. While adultery is probably not to be judged exclusively in terms of a fixed rule, whether enunciated by Tolstoi or by conservative churchmen, nevertheless, the spiritual vacuum implied in the relations between husband and wife when one of them commits adultery is sufficient evidence that divorce would not be imprudent. Whether either of the partners deems adultery to be sufficient ground for seeking a divorce is another question and is apt to be bound up with the temperaments of the two persons, as well as the question of the frequency of the offence.

The attitude of a married couple towards the significance of

supernatural religion will in some cases exercise a strong influence upon their feelings towards adultery and towards divorce in general. This fact is brought up frequently as a justification for considering marriage as based primarily upon religious factors. While a belief in a supernatural basis for marriage may bring with it a deep sense of the responsibilities involved, not every wise marriage requires this conviction. Human relations have a significance in their own right, whatever additional meaning they may possess within the framework of a larger religious view. By assuming that marriage is significant solely because of its religious basis, we are forced to rule out from the start the possibility that some marriages can achieve a genuine spiritual meaning without any such basis. On the other hand, if we seek for those ways in which marriage can be filled with meaning apart from its relation to religion, we in no way preclude whatever additional significance supernatural religion is capable of bringing.

DIVORCE AND CHILDREN

In families with children, the problems of divorce take a new form. The same difficulties—insanity, cruelty, adultery—which tend to separate the parents have very definite effects upon the children. Adam Smith makes sympathy one of the most universal feelings of mankind. It involves the tendency of a person to put himself in the place of another and experience the other's feelings. The love and tenderness to which a child becomes accustomed are quickly reproduced in its own feelings. The feelings of hatred, anger, and cruelty, in the opinion of Smith, are participated in least easily by another person, for the obvious reason that the recipient of these feelings tends to call forth the opposite emotions in the spectator. When the Capulets hate the Montagues, if we know nothing of the circumstances our sympathies become easily divided. To some extent we may sympathize with the Capulets in their hate; to some degree we may pity the Montagues as the objects

of such hate. Only when the two houses become reconciled can we still the clash of sympathies in our own breasts.

Under normal circumstances, a child is able to enter deeply into the feelings of its parents, probably far more than the latter realize. Finding its parents loving, hating, fond of, and angry at, the same things, the child easily duplicates these feelings. When it notices mutual love between the mother and father, there is no conflict in its own emotions. When, however, it finds that its mother is the object of the hatred of its father, the very props are removed from under its own tendency sympathetically to imitate. Its love for its mother cancels and annihilates its love for its father, and by the principle of sympathy produces hatred for him. Its love for its father produces the same effects in regard to its mother. The entire emotional life of the child may become upset in this way, unless the child is allowed quickly and permanently to participate wholly in the feelings of the one parent or the other. Even if this participation is achieved, a remnant of the opposing feelings may remain to cast a doubt upon the child's love for the parent whom it continues to love. Some such clash of feelings is what is usually meant when it is said that quarrelling, hatred, and cruelty in parents have serious emotional effects upon children.

From the point of view of the child, the answer to marital difficulties is not divorce, but rather a complete restoration of affection between the parents. Any other solution is relatively unsatisfactory. If there is a divorce, the continued sense of divided affection remains, and all of the advantages of home life vanish. If there is no divorce, and the parents stay together only for the good of the child, at best the only benefits which remain are the external advantages of a home. Which of these two relatively unsatisfactory solutions is more prudent, probably depends upon the extent and nature of the rift between the parents. If the hatred, quarrelling, cruelty, or habit of adultery has gone so far that the semblance of affection can barely be preserved, probably the remaining advantages of

having a "home" are far too small to offset the effects of this observable state of affairs between the parents. In this case, the disruption of the home is probably less serious for the child than the consequences of keeping the family intact. On the other hand, to the extent that the split between the parents is actually minor, or at least sufficiently narrow to make possible the retention of some appearance of affection between them, not only would these very facts justify the continuance of the marriage in the hope of returning affection and fidelity, but there would be also a great gain in the life of the child in having the home continue. While there is no one answer to these questions which will fit every case, the presence of children makes divorce a step which should be all the more carefully pondered, with patient discrimination and evaluation. Perhaps a mere realization of the importance of the situation from the child's point of view will be a decisive factor in eliminating the reasons or seeming reasons for separation.

INSANITY

Unlike the situations which we have so far considered, insanity has, until a relatively recent time, been widely viewed as a horrible, unmentionable subject. Except for an attempt by Hippocrates (in the fifth century B.C.) and his successors to treat mental disorders as merely a diseased condition of the physical brain, the demonological explanation was widespread prior to the nineteenth century—the theory that insane persons are possessed with demons, benevolent, prophetic, or malevolent. The attitude of earlier ages towards witchcraft exemplifies the demonological view. In the eighteenth century this conception was replaced by the political view, which was in fact no explanation at all and involved merely loading the insane with chains and keeping them in dungeons for the protection of society. With the rise of nineteenth-century science, two major theories of insanity appeared: (1) The physiological conception, that mental disorders are due to definite, detectable physiologi-

cal causes; (2) the psychogenic view, that some mental illnesses are due to discoverable, and possibly eradicable, psychical factors. The first of these theories has received notable confirmation in the treatment of alcoholism and paresis. In the first case, excessive alcoholic drinking was found to produce definite psychopathic conditions, which could be removed by proper treatment. In the second, it was discovered that syphilis is a necessary predisposing cause. Syphilitic infection, if unchecked, is apt to pass over into paresis (a specific form of insanity) after about seven years. The psychogenic theory, while not achieving the same notable successes, claims to have been able to cure some illnesses, by manipulating the patient's environment, *i.e.*, by discovering what childhood influences, unsolved problems, emotional upsets, worries, etc., play upon his mind, and by eliminating these in order to remedy his condition. Although there is some disagreement among specialists as to the efficacy of this second method, all schools agree that the old theory of demons is false, and that while society must be protected from the acts of the irresponsible insane, this fact is no justification for dungeons and chains. Mentally ill persons should rather be treated with every possible kindness, and receive every type of comfort and privilege commensurate with the safety of society and the power of the taxpayer's pocketbook. As a result of this newer attitude, there are today many hospitals for the insane in which comfortable, pleasant living is possible, and in which the patients have every advantage of expert medical care.

The student of wise conduct should remember that insanity is relatively rare, and that the chances are exceedingly small that any form of it will appear in the life of a normal person. He should also realize that mental abnormality, even when it appears, is only different in degree from the normal characteristics of the mind. Therefore, above all, he should adopt an attitude of alert and calm confidence in regard to this evil. The prudent person can become clearly aware of, and secure in, his

own normality, by realizing precisely what are some of the symptoms of abnormality. Various, differing types of mental illnesses are marked by some of the following conditions: (1) Illusions, *i.e.*, inexact or inaccurate preceptions of an actual object or situation. Beers⁶ tells us that when he was ill he saw many objects in the room in quite distorted forms. (2) Hallucinations, "a perception (really an alleged preception) appearing without any external object or situation stimulating the sense organs involved." Lady Macbeth's perception of blood upon her hand several weeks after the murder of Duncan is a classic case of a visual hallucination. Auditory hallucinations involve sometimes the hearing of voices. (3) Delusions, mistaken beliefs or systems of such mistaken beliefs. Two important types of delusions are those of grandeur, in which the patient believes that he is Napoleon, or some other famous person, and of persecution, in which he believes that known or unknown enemies are covertly plotting against him. (4) Abnormal emotional states. In manic-depressive psychoses there are periods of extreme emotional elation, excessive expressed energy, and activity of thought, followed by periods of equally extreme emotional dejection, lack of muscular energy, and poverty of thought. (5) Loss of memory, both in recalling and retaining ideas. (6) Disorders of muscular activities, paralyses of various types, tremors, spasms, convulsions, and the absence, abnormal exaggeration, or abnormal weakness of physiological reflexes.

Within the present century there has developed in many communities a new approach to the problems of insanity, aiming to prevent illness by dealing with it in its incipient stages. This movement is called "mental hygiene." Investigation of many psychotic cases has shown long developmental histories extending back to school and even pre-school days. Mental hygiene is a systematic attempt to advance the emotional well-being of an individual, by modifying or manipulating his en-

⁶ C. W. Beers, *A Mind That Found Itself*, Doubleday, Doran, 1935, p. 30.

vironment. This aim permeates the school programmes of many communities, and has also been adopted by various agencies of social welfare. Attempts are made to consider not only the intellectual development of children, but also the development of "the whole child," his basic dispositions, habits, interests, and emotions. When a child develops a tendency to shun his fellows, to become moody or unduly excitable, the teacher or psychologist seeks to discover what particular influence in his home or school life may be at the root of the difficulty, and, if possible, to bring about an elimination of the irritating factor and a substitution of conditions more congenial to the development of a normal state of mind. The same methods are carried over into the handling of incipient illnesses in adult life. The task of earning a living, unhappiness in marital relations, or merely an unpleasant environment, often is found to produce a strain upon the emotional life of relatively healthy persons. Mental-hygiene groups bring together physicians, teachers, psychologists, social workers, and ministers in a common effort to attack the problems of incipient mental abnormality in individuals.

The prudent individual will take advantage of the techniques of mental hygiene, as well as of medical aid, if he finds himself faced with a mental disorder. If a definite mental illness has appeared, possibly the patient himself will be quite incapable of aiding in a cure. Yet in some cases much can be done with his co-operation that is impossible without it. Probably a most important step forward would be the discovery of ways of aiding cured patients to find some kind of satisfactory readjustment to life, some way of enabling them to make their lives more meaningful and valuable. The ethics of situations has no answer to these questions except to emphasize the need for active efforts not merely to overcome difficulties, but also to reach ends which are chosen for their own sakes. Possibly some important goal to be won, an interesting career, family life, or friendship, can in some cases aid in the achievement of

a cure. In any event, wisdom in conduct requires the most careful consideration of any condition which threatens the very inner life of the individual.

DEATH

The consideration of death brings us close to issues which lie beyond all problems of conduct. Perhaps death is not an evil which people should under all circumstances desire to prevent. Aristotle spoke of the happy man who lives a virtuous life "for a full term of years . . . and who shall continue to live so, and *shall die as he lived.*"⁷ Since this kind of death is the culmination of a life of wisdom in conduct, perhaps it is not an evil at all. The Stoics went even further, and considered suicide to be justified under certain extreme conditions. Only if all life is unquestionably good would all death be necessarily bad. Our utter incapacity to evaluate death as something experienced or experienceable prevents us from ever finally settling this question from a purely ethical point of view.

Although human beings may be, in a sense, like condemned criminals with an indefinite reprieve, few people experience a sense of impending destruction, at least most of the time. Epicurus was probably wrong when he held that the fear of death is one of the deepest fears of man; this fear is probably experienced more frequently by thoughtful men than by most other people. It is even questionable whether reflection upon death and an ensuing sense of fear are identical with a real fear. A preoccupation with the subject of death is perhaps linked with the age of a person and the extent to which he has witnessed deaths, particularly those of his friends and relatives. Curiously enough, Epicurus desired only to banish a person's fear of his own death. He said that since we are able to fear death only when it has not come, and that when it has come we are beyond the reach of all feelings, such fear is foolish. He ignored the fact that for some people, at least, the fear of

· ⁷ Italics ours.

the death of friends or close relatives may be much greater than a parallel fear about themselves. The deaths of others we are in danger of experiencing at any time; and consequently only the inwardly tranquil, and perhaps a bit self-centred, sage will find any very great comfort in the words of Epicurus.

If prudence were the end of life, one should try to fortify oneself against the effects of the deaths of one's friends and relatives by saying that these things must happen, that they are for the best in the long run, etc. Long suffering or a severe weakening of mental capacity may indeed make a person's death seem desirable both for himself and for others associated with him. We say it is better for him to die than to continue to suffer; or that he is better dead than in such a mental condition. While these judgements are right as far as they go, they ignore the fact that the tragedy lies not in the passage from painful sickness or mental weakness to death, but rather in the transition from former health to death. When sickness intervenes as a middle stage, the cessation of life seems justified, but viewed in a wider perspective the tragedy and sorrow remain undiminished. This is increasingly true in the cases of death in early life or in childhood. He is wise indeed who can look at such facts unflinchingly—not consoled by the reasonings of Epicurus—and yet continue to find meaning in life. Possibly time alone can remove the effects of such tragedies. Perhaps an answer lies in religion.

SUMMARY

We have now completed a brief survey of certain major situations in the lives of individuals involving chiefly the prevention and remedy of evils. These negative situations are limited in the sense that they involve the orientation of conduct solely away from unwanted states, conditions, or things. Backwardness in childhood, poverty, sickness, legal difficulties, divorce, insanity, and death, involve evils which persons wish to prevent and to remedy. When a person encounters these

problems in his life he must realize that upon their solution hinges every aspect of a life of well-being. Unless he can discover some way of surmounting these obstacles, he is apt to find the door closed to the more positive values of life, and the very basis of a morally excellent character removed. If he fails to find an easy answer, he must, nevertheless, retain to the best of his ability an attitude of alert confidence; he must not lose courage. Above all, to the extent that his difficulties are his own fault, due to his failure to apply in practice whatever measure of wisdom he has won, he must put forth new efforts. For the essence of all wise living is application and practice.

Everybody will be occupied to some degree with negative ethical situations. Some people are forced to consider the solution of these problems to the exclusion of all other aims. Yet, in general, a satisfactory solution of negative problems cannot form the major segment of a life of wisdom in conduct. Undue attention to negative problems may generate the mould of character and mind which exalts such an aim as "security" as the be-all and end-all of living. The result is likely to be a tendency to escape from responsibility in life, and a proneness to be blind to the possibility of more positive achievement. While an unreflective type of daredevil life is not wise, nevertheless an entirely prudent life is decidedly restricted in its scope; wise living points beyond prudence to some of the positive situations to which we shall next turn.

CHAPTER IX

TYPES OF POSITIVE SITUATIONS IN PERSONAL LIFE

POSITIVE SITUATIONS AND ETHICAL WISDOM

FOR those persons who are not forced to spend a major portion of their lives overcoming some sort of misfortune, the test of wisdom in conduct will be their standing with reference to some of the various positive situations which will now be considered. Not every positive goal which a person seeks has any marked ethical significance. A man who plants a patch of raspberry bushes has as his aim a crop of ripe berries. This end is a positive one, not related to any type of prevention or remedy, yet the situation is of no importance ethically. There are some goals, however, which are so intimately connected with the formation of a morally excellent character that a search for them is intrinsic to wise living. Childhood play, education, the choice of a career, marriage, and friendship have such direct effects upon a man's total life of well-being and well-doing that these situations must be examined more closely if we wish to understand the specific ways in which wisdom can pass over into the practice of living. Unlike negative problems, there is a clearer temporal sequence in which these various positive situations occur in a person's life. Play in childhood is the first major determinant of character; next comes education as a second important body of influences; then come the choice of a career, friendship, marriage, and parenthood, as important types of ethical situations. A man who has been able to solve the many problems bound up in these situations may be said to have gone far, as an individual, towards a life of wisdom in conduct.

PROBLEMS OF CHILDHOOD

Since human character is to a high degree the product of past practice, the kind of person a man is at any particular

stage in his life will be to a large measure the expression of the types of activities which he has carried on prior to that time. Now, the days of childhood form a large segment of the past life of every adult. Consequently whatever additional influences have operated to make or break a person's character, childhood experiences are the raw materials out of which his basic dispositions have been formed.

A child's early years are a time of rapid, continuous growth, mental and physical. Increase in size and strength is greater and quicker in earliest childhood than later. Along with such structural, physical development comes a complex functional growth, the use of the organs of sense, the performance of various skilled movements, sitting, walking, running, and talking. This development, almost spontaneous at the outset, becomes deliberate learning at a very early age, and, from this point on, mental growth—perception, retentiveness, recollection, fancy, and understanding—even outstrips the physical. The search for amusement which appears in later and more bored years is nonexistent, for there is more novelty in the experience of each day than the small child can appreciate. A series of days and even years of new experiences and new things learned, together with a seemingly unending variety of new experiences in prospect, quickens in the normal child a characteristic which becomes the basis for almost all subsequent mental growth. This characteristic is curiosity. The search of a child (and to a lesser extent of everyone) for new, positive goals or ends is bound up very intimately with the desire to investigate and understand any and everything. The later life of a person is deeply influenced by the fate which an initial childhood curiosity suffers at the hands of nurses, parents, and teachers. An important aim of child education should be to aid the intense curiosity of a child of three years concerning "shoes and ships and sealing wax, and cabbages and kings" to carry over with undiminished force to the kind of problems which he will ultimately face as an adult.

This problem is an ethical one. The child who has developed

an interest in harmful things is one whose natural interest in all things has been allowed to become too much narrowed. It is wise for nurses, parents, and teachers to follow with sympathy and understanding every new development in the curiosity of a child, to aid and abet a widening of that curiosity, to be willing to let every new thing learned point to another possible thing to be learned. The normal child will be quick to notice differences (discrimination) and make comparisons (imagination). What particular things are learned will be to a large extent within the control of the teacher.

The surest ground for a continued development of a child's mind is the attention and affection of the adults around it. A child needs affection not merely to bring out its own feelings of love and tenderness, but also as a prop for its ever-expanding curiosity. In learning to perform the most elementary skills with all the tedious trial and tragic error involved, the child needs encouragement and appreciation. Half of the meaning of learning successfully to jump or swing or ride or whistle or speak lies in the appreciation and applause resulting. The sting of failure is but momentary, and continued effort assured, if the child is aware of the patience, understanding, and, above all, the affection of the parents or teacher. The affectionate parent is a fulcrum upon which the young child's ideas and emotions can operate to gain new and effective strength. If such support is absent, the development of the child will be impeded and will lack direction. Parental affection is at once an impetus towards a continued expansion of curiosity, and a determinant of the directions which curiosity will take.

PLAY

By and large, the most important experience of childhood is play. Play is *the active participation of a child in a restricted environment of objects or persons or both, in accordance with rules or conditions fancied by the child or suggested by an adult or both.* In reading or listening to a story, the child doubtless

participates in the events experienced, but such participation is passive rather than active, and hence he is not playing. Only when he is actively dealing with persons or things is play possible. But active participation in his total actual environment, dressing, eating, sleeping, walking, etc., is not play, because the environment is not sufficiently restricted. Play is possible only when the child becomes actively occupied for the time being with one special range of things and persons. In genuine play this participation is never haphazard, however illogical the shift of actions and attitudes may seem to be to an observing adult. It always follows definite motives and conditions either imposed by the child himself or suggested by an adult, or both. In the first case, the child's fancy is king; in the second, its understanding. The younger the child the greater the element of fancy is apt to be in play; the older he is the greater the influence of understanding. Let us illustrate:

One of the first sorts of restricted environments in which a child actively participates or plays is made up of objects. In the most fanciful type of play, any objects whatsoever will do. The child will be handling only sticks, stones, or twigs, carrying them from place to place, but in fancy he is collecting groceries, cooking them for dinner, etc. Such fancy is carried to the point at which he actually tries to eat the stick as representing a cake. His failure to do so in no way brings him back to reality; the sticks or stones remain for him cakes, potatoes, cabbages, a stove, a plate, a knife, or a fork. A less fanciful kind of play with objects involves blocks, toy motor-cars, fire-engines, dolls, houses, and what not. In such play the objects are fancied to be their larger originals, a genuine motor-car, fire-engine, house, doll-person, etc. In all fanciful play, the sequence of the child's ideas is restricted quite consistently to the logic of the imagined environment. The sticks serve for food at dinner, and the child objects to the shattering of this dream world no less sturdily than he protests when genuine food is taken away. His fancy can eventually be directed to something else, but the process

may be very difficult; consistency demands that a meal, real or imagined, not be interrupted. The toy fire-engine is on its way to a fire; no other considerations are allowed to break the logic of fancy. No suggestions by adults are needed to keep the child's attention on its play; the play world is real and demands and receives as consistent participation by the child as reality itself. The doll is sick and therefore requires every attention, including pity and worry.

Among the objects of a child's play, there are two types of particular importance—hard objects, such as blocks, and soft ones, notably a sand pile or clay. In the case of blocks, there is a significant shift of fancy. Like any other object—stick, stone, or twig—blocks can serve in the child's fancy for anything whatsoever. They possess, however, a unique quality which gives a new direction to the child's interest. In the place of three or more blocks, suddenly a bridge appears. The constructed bridge represents a restriction rather than an expansion of fancy. Whereas one stick (or no stick) could formerly serve as a bridge, now only blocks in a certain arrangement can do so, and this happens because of their resemblance to an actual bridge. Building with blocks marks an increase in the child's learning, but it represents a decrease in his dependence upon fancy alone. From this moment on, only a constructed model stands for a bridge in that particular play world. The child is learning to construct, but he is also learning to fancy less.

Constructive activity with blocks, sticks, etc., marks the beginning of the tendency of play to become an activity guided by the child. All subsequent building of tree-houses, forts, fireplaces, dams, huts, and mechanical devices is play involving a marked increase of control of physical objects, no longer entirely according to fancy but now in conformity with the conditions of the outside world, the skill of hand and eye, and the understanding of the mind. Understanding partially, though

never totally, supplants fancy. Play with hard objects is one of the most valuable means of guiding such a change.

The same shift in the type of active participation of the child in a limited environment of objects occurs in an even more striking fashion in the case of play with soft things—sand, clay, etc. To the astonishment of the young child, its hand moulds the sand into a cake. Whereas anything whatsoever stood for a cake formerly, now the physical likeness of a cake appears as a result of what the child does. As in the case of the blocks, the fancy is redirected and limited; this time, however, the object (cake) is created not merely by a rearrangement of hard things but by fashioning a new thing out of a formless mass. From this moment onward, play becomes more and more restricted to those things which the child can construct and which he can then recognize with his understanding. Play with soft objects involves an even more subtle type of building and creating than play with hard things. The basis is laid for play (and later work) with completely unformed masses—the sawing of wood and the shaping of objects from it, eventually the moulding of metals, and the like.

PLAY WITH OTHER CHILDREN

An even more important type of play, however, is found in a child's active participation in a restricted environment that includes other persons, at first other children. The very young child often fancies that he is someone else, calls himself by another name, and does things which he attributes to the alleged person, who is usually older and therefore admired. Even sticks and blocks are occasionally endowed with personality and talked to, although this is rare. A toy dog or doll provides the basis for play with other fancied children. This type of fancy is so vivid that an encounter with another actual child is often an almost terrifying experience. The transition from pure fancy to complete fact in the case of objects is usually

quite gradual; the contrast between a stick and a cake is not very great. The passage from a fancied child to a real one is often so abrupt that understanding cannot gradually replace unbridled fancy. The other child is too indubitably there. The result is that play with other children can effectively begin only when a child has encountered others so continually in actuality that they are taken for granted, and fancy can again begin to assert itself.

Once this kind of play begins, however, it proceeds exactly as does all other play; it is an active participation by the child in an environment limited only by fancy, with the other child playing a rôle in that fancy-world. Johnny and Mary are collecting sticks which in the minds of both stand for cakes, potatoes, cabbages, the stove, etc. The consistency with which the children restrict their fancy to the particular play-world is as pronounced as when one child plays alone. Not only does the stick definitely remain a cake (which may be chewed), but it remains Mary's cake, which she, in her own eyes and in the eyes of Johnny, has for dinner while Johnny has some other object. If they are shopping, Johnny does not allow Mary to do what the situation in fact would not allow. She must get this vegetable and carry it to the stove. Fancy is king, and there are two fancies which more or less must coincide if the playing is to continue.

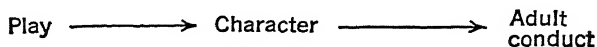
This sort of play provides a basis for later discriminating conduct, in a way that play with objects alone never does. Since Mary's stick (cake) is Mary's, it cannot be Johnny's. Johnny must recognize the presence of another personality which limits his own. Fancy becomes limited by understanding, this time not because of the nature of blocks and sand piles, but because the one child often does or wants to do what the other child fancies. Mary's possession of the stick (cake) is a far more trying limitation upon the fancy of Johnny than the actual nature of the stick. He must learn to experience the pleasure of some-

one's having a cake in the form of a stick, with the realization that the person is not himself. Play under such circumstances, while it may end in tragedy, is severe practice in problems of living yet to come.

As a child grows older, his play—whether with objects or persons or both—becomes directed, to an increasing extent, not only by his own understanding of the nature of real objects and persons, but by suggestions which adults are able effectively to make. Games are a form of play in which the rules or conditions according to which a child actively participates in a restricted environment are directly or indirectly suggested by adults, rather than by the fancy of the child. An adult need not be present when a game is played, but the environment is restricted by rules or conditions which originate with adults. The more complex the rules, the more mature the children must be in order to play the game without supervision. Most games are forms of play for more than two children. In a very general sense of the term, games include singing and dancing. Some games form what Plato called the choral art, including song—the movement of the voice arousing and awakening rhythm in the soul—and dancing—physical movement arousing and awakening rhythm in the body. Possibly even such motion of the body as gymnastics, pursued with the end of health, can be considered a game, jumping, running, etc. Other play not involving singing or dancing ranges from such relatively easy games of early childhood as “hide and go seek” to such highly specialized games as modern sports. All of these games follow the suggestions of adults, and usually involve a group of players.

Guided play is a preparation for many types of conduct in adult life. If character is, to a considerable extent, the result of types of conduct, particularly habitual types, and if many, if not most, habits have their bases in childhood experiences, play in all its various forms is a major determinant of character. In addition, if wise living is the outcome of character, adult con-

duct is the expression of a disposition which childhood play has in some measure been instrumental in forming.



We cannot expect a child to exercise the types of choice, and unaided to form the types of habits, which are wise, but even in childhood the rudiments of careful choosing and practice may be present in some degree. This is especially apt to be the case in forms of play involving groups of children. Whether we consider Johnny's realization that it is fair for Mary to have her turn on the bicycle, or whether we consider the meaning of sportsmanship in athletics, the notion of "fair play" carries over from play to many major realms of conduct. To play fairly you must know what is fair; you must evaluate a present situation in the light of that knowledge; but, most important of all, you must make the application of that evaluation a sort of second nature. A true sportsman "instinctively" performs a complicated motion on the playing field with a due regard for the rules of the game. His excellence in playing is at once a virtue and a settled habit or disposition to have a due regard for the rules of the game even in the heat of action. Much conduct on the wider playground of life is wise also precisely because it reflects such a formed habit or disposition to act fairly.

LOWER EDUCATION

The transition in childhood from days of unbroken play to days of schooling *and* play is a gradual one, with kindergarten as an intermediate step. Singing and dancing, various types of group games, the guided use of the hands in weaving, modelling, building, and other creative activities, are all on the border line between play and the type of "work" which a child must do in school proper. For some children, kindergarten represents the first experience of playing in a group.

In the lower grades of school the young child becomes acquainted with the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic,

and is carried forward through gradual stages into a wide curriculum of lower-school subjects. The same curiosity which lies at the basis of all of a child's learning is also the foundation of his learning in school. Prior to school days the child's play has been determined by his own fancy and the facts in the world about him. To some extent, adults have been able to guide his play, but such control has been probably somewhat haphazard. To a great degree the child's play world has been the product of his own unbridled fancy. In school he finds himself no longer limited at play by external objects and the suggestions of a parent, but guided by his teacher into an environment which would not have been suggested either by his own fancy or by the facts at hand. He feels himself "constrained" to pay attention to letters, words, and numbers, sets of symbols which are not found in objects at hand, and yet are not the sort of fancied objects which respond entirely to his own wishes. "A" is and remains "A," and its recurrence in "C A T" is monotonous and forced in comparison with the child's own manner of fancying a cat. "2" is and remains "2," when it would be more interesting to let it shift into something else. Guided thinking, the reduction of fancy, without remainder, to understanding, seems hard for many children. For this reason they find it difficult actively to participate (play) in those restricted environments called spelling and arithmetic.

Some modern, experimental schools try to ease the transition of the child's mind from simpler play worlds to the worlds of letters and numbers in such a way that the latter experiences will also be play. These attempts succeed to some extent at the expense of another factor in the child's development. If all life were potentially play, the habit or tendency to work would be a mere state of mind which deserved to be eradicated. So long, however, as living continues of necessity to involve much work for most people, the school child ought to learn as early as possible the habit of working. Work is not the same thing as toil, the latter being exclusively slavish and monotonous. Work,

however, requires a kind of effort not found in play, and a child should become in some measure acquainted with this type of exertion in the earliest years of school. There is much to be said for the more conservative method of schooling which stresses rigid modes of instruction rather than placing too much emphasis upon "fun," "pleasantness," or play. Any methods of play which can be used to guide the child's curiosity to numbers and letters are valuable; but the tendency of experimental schools to sacrifice the knowledge of numbers and letters for the attitude of play goes too far.

The aims of lower-school learning are three: The gathering of information, the acquisition of tools, mental and physical, and the development of character and attitudes. The first two motives have important relations to wisdom in conduct, while the third is nothing more or less than the aim of ethics itself. Goethe compared a mind stored merely with facts to a lumber attic and a trash heap. Yet the young child is unacquainted with so much information that one aim of his education must be the acquisition of factual knowledge about man and his world. The teacher can never be sure how important apparently purposeless information may later turn out to be. Knowledge is not the essence of wise conduct, but ignorance is often a cause of much foolish behaviour.

The acquisition of tools is an educational aim with even more important ethical consequences. In addition to various physical skills, the two most basic mental tools are language and numbers. Whatever the Evangelist may have meant by "the word" which he said was the first of all things, doubtless written, spoken, thought (or even implied) words are at the basis of all human living. The child will naturally enough gain a certain range of spoken words prior to his school days. His schooling must have as a major purpose the expansion of his speech and the attempt to match it as far as possible with a knowledge of the written, spelled word. Verbal symbols as such must augment the data gained through sight, touch, hearing, etc. Words

become tools for the child's later development in reading and speech. Indirectly, therefore, words influence subsequently developed character and its expression in conduct. No amount of right influence can take the place of a knowledge of language as one of the main vehicles of thinking and hence of discrimination, evaluation, and wise living.

Another major tool in a child's schooling is mathematics. Over the door of Plato's school was written: "Only mathematicians may enter here." Perhaps Plato's belief in the importance of geometry in higher learning was exaggerated, but in lower school some experience with mathematical symbols is basic. Apart from the imposing edifice of mathematical knowledge as such, and its demonstrated utility in man's conquest of nature, mathematics provides a valuable tool in the development of the human mind itself. We may question Plato's belief that the wise ruler must be a mathematician, and the conviction of the Epicureans that logic, as such, is the chief clue to ethical living, but to the extent that discriminating thought is an important aspect of wisdom in conduct, mathematical training may play an important ethical rôle in education.

The main ethical motive in lower-school education is the development of character and attitudes. If play is the broad base upon which a child's character is formed, education is the equally broad second layer of the foundation. During all later life a person's mind and character are never again in so malleable a condition as in school days. His habits of thought and conduct are never again so completely at the mercy of chance influences. A stray word or attitude in the classroom or on the playground is caught up and imitated almost immediately and made his own. The formation of a settled disposition directed towards virtuous and wise living receives its initial impetus here. Out of many possible sets of habits, some specific ones begin here to crystallize, possibly in an unbreakable fashion. For good or for evil, the child's character is apt to become and remain what his school and playground environment makes it.

Many problems of crime, insanity, or merely stupid living cannot be attacked successfully by dealing with the adult later. In the days of play and education, however, beneficial influences may make themselves effective. What should these influences be?

There can be no one list of right influences which should be imparted to the child. The teacher who feels most confident in his moralizing may watch the character of a child break in his hands. Yet, in general, the lower-school child is quick to recognize the ideals that he has already come to appreciate. Fair play, an interest in the other fellow's point of view, pleasure in successful achievement, and the avoidance of a show of authority where no need of it is clear to the child, such attitudes as these, if allowed to dominate the school environment, will contribute more to the development of a child's character than more deliberate efforts to supply right influences. In general, on the lower-school level, character development must proceed chiefly in terms of childhood values; additional, later aims and ideals must be held in abeyance.

HIGHER EDUCATION, INCLUDING COLLEGE

While many children proceed directly from lower school to some vocation, for others there is the intermediate period of higher education, including college. There are several different types of higher learning, each of which is capable of exercising important influence upon the character and conduct of young people. These are the humanistic, the scientific, the professional, and the group melioristic types. The first three are at least as old as fourth-century (B.C.) Athens; the last has come into prominence chiefly within the past hundred years.

While no older than the scientific and professional theories of education, the humanistic or liberal type became predominant in Europe in modern times. This type of education was a privilege of the few. It was designed for gentlemen with private incomes, or at best for those young men who wished to become

clergymen or teachers. For this reason, it bore no relation to a later professional career, and adopted an attitude of scorn—inherited from the Greeks—for anything requiring the use of the hands. Hence, experimental science was excluded. The humanistic aim was to acquaint students with belles-lettres, chiefly the Greek and Roman classics, with a dip into modern learning and perhaps a modicum of pure science. If students should happen to turn later to political life or to the various professions, well and good; but such considerations were not allowed to influence the nature of the liberal studies pursued. A touch of classical learning was a nice ornament for any gentleman; it might even come to mean something more in his later life of leisure.

For some people, the aims of humanistic learning are quite in harmony with the search for a life of well-being and well-doing. When, however, the values of a liberal education are exalted to a pinnacle of unique importance in the lives of young people, the limitations of those values reveal themselves. As a result of the democratization of higher learning, most present-day students face the problem of earning their daily bread later. Their future surroundings will be, necessarily, quite different from the leisurely world of the cultivated gentleman. For persons who achieve some measure of leisure, there may be no wiser way of living than the exclusive pursuit of the liberal-arts studies. Wisdom in conduct is only one type of wisdom, and the search for other types may well involve values which are different from ethical aims and goods, or even more important than these when judged by some other standard. However, for the student who must spend the major part of his days in a profession or trade quite inharmonious with the purposes and interests of a cultivated gentleman with a private income, the values of a liberal education become necessarily restricted to after-office hours. The tragic predicament of a young man with a love of art, literature, pure science, or philosophy who must spend eight hours a day as a stenographer must give pause to

those persons who would make a love of the humanities the sole aim of education.

The second general type of education is the study of natural science, the search for an understanding of natural phenomena. This conception was also prevalent in early Greek times. Yet in spite of remarkable advances in various sciences—astronomy, biology, etc.—the Greeks lacked adequate experimental instruments and tools, and made correspondingly little progress in empirical science. The study of nature is carried on both as an end in itself, and also because of its utility in the lives of men. The fact that considerable scientific knowledge has had practical applications to the affairs of men does not alter the fact that much progress in science has been the result of relatively disinterested investigation and experimentation. Practical application is one major concern of the scientific investigator, the other being the study of natural processes and objects simply to discover the truth.

Like a liberal education, an education based upon the search for truth gives a student the chance to have one of the most noteworthy, positive experiences possible for man. Even apart from the effect of scientific discoveries upon conduct—which for ethics is the all-important result of science—the life of *theoria*, the pursuit of pure science, needs no justification at all. Nothing is further from the spirit of our study than even the bare possibility of bending all scientific investigation to some ethical, political, or even social end. In fact, it is unfortunate that some modern scientists feel called upon at times to justify their own existence and activities in the eyes of the layman. The existence of such feelings is itself evidence that the ideal of truth for its own sake is not so widespread as it ought to be. Every scientist should have the courage of a Spinoza to tread his own path even in the face of the cries of "Lo, here!" and "Lo, there!"

Yet not all people can become scientists. For most persons an education which generates exclusively a love of scientific

truth is apt to be as narrow in relation to the whole panorama of conduct as the teachings of the liberal arts. In fact, in the case of immature students and those who are unable to become scientists, a regard for scientific truth alone is likely to be more narrow than attention to the liberal studies. The exclusive preoccupation with atoms or nebulae which in a Planck or an Einstein is desirable and necessary, is sheerest folly in the lives of many persons facing personal, professional, political, or group melioristic tasks. School training in science is one of the most valuable ingredients of our educational heritage. As such it is to be guarded and fostered. It remains, however, only one of the positive goals towards which a person may strive in a life of well-being and well-doing.

The third aim of education is avowedly practical: namely, preparation for, or training in, the skilled activities of a profession or a trade. Along with the democratization of higher education in modern life, the professional motive has inevitably arisen. A large majority of students today carry on their quest for learning with the problems of a career lying just ahead. They inevitably judge their studies, whether in high school or college, with the question in mind: What is the practical use of these studies? And by practical use they do not merely mean the kind of use to which mankind in general has turned such studies, but utility for themselves in their own professions. With the rise of our machine civilization, the demand for professional education (as old as the Greek sophists) has increased and has come to include many highly specialized skills. Schools of engineering, pharmacy, law, medicine, trade, business administration, and even teaching itself, appear as an answer to the demand for specialized training. This kind of education has developed so rapidly that the study of science and liberal arts becomes for many students merely preliminary to professional training. Many so-called students of the sciences and the humanities pursue these studies quite sceptically and cynically

as unfortunate "hurdles" which must be taken in their stride before their "real," useful education begins.

Some believers in the humanistic and scientific types of learning sharply decry such professional tendencies in modern education, while some advocates of professional training consider the other types as more or less drags upon progress. Both groups are quite right, from their own points of view. The believers in culture and truth are correct in holding that the professional motive corrupts their own aims; the sophists in Athens showed little respect for any ideal other than practical success. The believers in professional training are correct in claiming that the ideals of culture and theoretical truth were never designed for most people. These ideals cannot be adapted to the needs of the large majority of students who must quickly turn to professional problems, after possibly some lip service to other aims. Just as a European gentleman cannot grasp the point of view of an American gasoline merchant visiting art galleries, and sometimes stamps him as vulgar, so the modern liberal-arts teacher is likely to become discouraged at the failure of a future gasoline merchant to grasp the niceties of Virgil or of chemical analysis. In both cases it is perhaps more remarkable that a man living in, or destined to live in, a workaday world should be expected to have any interest in these matters at all. Professional training has a place in the educational scheme of things. For some people its aims may, indeed, be very restricted; for many others, however, it provides a necessary basis for a future life of wise, active living.

Within the past century, an increased attention on the part of modern communities to the many problems of group welfare has given rise to another major theory of education, the group melioristic. Sociology, criminology, and, to a lesser degree, history, political science, and economics, have as one of their main aims the generation of an appreciation on the part of a student of the need for intelligent and active efforts to bring about improvements in social and political life. This motive is

ethical. Some of the idealism which frequently goes into the study of religion and a preparation for the ministry becomes diverted into plans, by young people, for prison work, slum clearance, political reform, and the like.

The group melioristic motive in education represents a valuable expansion of the purposes of schooling, in the direction of wisdom in conduct. The social studies ought to show a young person the essential interdependence of his own well-being and that of other persons in the community. The student should realize that his own life cannot be considered wise unless he plays some part in aiding other people to obtain the external goods which he himself requires and seeks. The very fact that he is in a position to enjoy the benefits of a higher education imposes some unusual degree of obligation upon him to consider the wider issues of group ethics, and to play some rôle in the promotion of group welfare.

Yet even the group melioristic type of education can be carried too far. Just as few students are able to become scientists or men of letters, so relatively few are able to turn the major portion of their lives to matters of group welfare. Any type of education which stresses these problems at the expense of all other values—science, art, personal ethics, etc.—may focus the attention of students too much upon the troubles and evils in the world. This kind of education easily becomes indoctrination, and tends to leave a definite imprint upon the minds of young people. Such ideals as “security,” “reform,” “protection,” etc., become unduly stressed, and readily carry over, and affect the student’s own way of living. The student may become so conscious of the importance of such problems as poverty, crime, group health, political injustice, etc., that he loses all appreciation of other educational values, even the ones which may impinge most directly upon his own life, or for which he as an individual may be best suited to strive. The result may be that he leaves college quite unfit to carry any of

his group melioristic aims into practice, yet unaware that any other problems are worth his consideration. Therefore, while higher education ought to keep as one of its main goals the awakening of students to the importance of useful service in the political and social arena, this aim ought not to be stressed at the expense of other types of learning.

In briefly tracing these four different conceptions of a higher education, we come to the point in the lives of young people at which the roads divide. Some students will find their subsequent living directed chiefly towards some goal or goals which a liberal education has helped them first to appreciate. Others will find the same initial impetus in the study of science. Others will begin the more practical activities for which they have received professional training. Still others will quite justifiably become group meliorists. There is no right way for all. These four types of education envisage four types of living, each of which is right and good for some people. Whichever path is chosen, the only thesis of this study is that such a choice should involve knowledge, discrimination, and careful evaluation. No one of these modes of education and the type of life resulting therefrom should be elevated to a peak of unique importance for everybody. For the individual, the choice must lie more or less in one direction or another.

CHOOSING A CAREER

The problem of choosing a career is likely to be one of the first that a young person faces upon leaving school or college. It is pre-eminently an ethical problem, because so much is at stake, in character and later conduct. If play and education are the first two bases upon which character is built, the lifework to which a person commits himself is probably the third. A vocation occupies a majority of a person's waking moments and hours over his full span of adult life. Thus, the activities carried on in that vocation will be the ones which to a large extent

form his habits, or at least one major set of them. If what a person becomes is to a large degree dependent upon what he habitually does, a person's character will in some measure reflect the nature of his vocation.

Wealth, illness, unemployableness, or other conditions and circumstances cause some people never to enter a vocation. The fact that some persons have private incomes and others are in bread lines does not diminish the importance of the choice of a career for many others. Nor does the fact that many people "slither" into precisely the career which suits them justify the abandonment of discrimination and careful choice. Likewise, the wisdom of one man's choice of one vocation does not mean that equally cogent reasons may not be discoverable for another man's choice of a quite different line of work. The considerations which make Blackstone's choice of law a wise one in no way detract from the compelling force of Osler's reasons for becoming a physician. Similarly, the possibility that either of two careers could be chosen by the same man with reasonable assurance of a resulting life of well-being and well-doing is no grounds for a cessation of discrimination on his part. In becoming a great psychologist, William James possibly gave up a life of high achievement as a physician.

What are some of the types of competing values which a man ought to consider in choosing his career? In the first place, there is the distinction between security and achievement. One of the main purposes which constrains a person to enter a vocation is the problem of economic security, earning a living, or "keeping the wolf from the door." This aim is preventive and remedial; it is directed chiefly towards the avoidance of the undesired condition of poverty. Special circumstances may justify stressing these considerations in choosing a career. Continued failure, excessive economic responsibilities, or a general lack of proved ability may make the choice of one's career in this fashion quite necessary and desirable. To the extent that such

conditions obtain, it is meaningless to allow other more positive aims and aspirations to dominate the choice.

A stress upon security in choosing a career is desirable, in general, in direct proportion to the age of the person. A man of fifty who is still concerned with selecting a career, or who contemplates changing his vocation, would be quite imprudent if he failed to put bread and butter first. Even if his economic responsibilities have not increased with his age, the difficulty of adjusting himself to a new line of work is apt to be quite great. His past habits have left too definite an imprint upon his character and talents to be very easily changed.

For a person at thirty the question is not quite so simple. Such a man has arrived at a time in life when at least the beginnings of vocational achievement are to be expected of him. As Jane Addams points out, in some of the manual trades these earlier years are the most effective and efficient ones. Perhaps such a person ought to be quite conservative and choose a line of work which promises the most assured economic security, ignoring propensities which point in a more risky direction. On the other hand, possibly even a man of thirty ought to show little or no concern for bare security in selecting a vocation. Perhaps he should prepare himself for, and plan to enter, a career solely because he likes the type of work.

For a person of twenty the situation is, again, different. Many young people can well afford to risk failure in a difficult career in order to have a chance of succeeding in it. The aims of such young people should be far higher than mere security. Paradoxically enough, the young man who has the greatest chance of achieving security is apt to be the one who considers such security as something to be taken in his stride towards a great deal more. Ambition, the desire for difficult, complex, positive, personal achievement, is highly desirable, particularly in the case of young people who are quite unaware of the scope of their abilities and potential accomplishments. When con-

trasted with an undue emphasis upon the mere escape from evils implied in the search for security alone, ambition implies a more positive, creative, and fruitful conception of life. "When I cease striving, I am someone's slave." Perhaps the slave of negative goals and security.

THE BREAD-AND-BUTTER FALLACY

There is one error which a young man choosing a career ought to be careful to avoid. This mistake may be labelled the bread-and-butter fallacy. It consists of forgetting that to choose a career with the search for bread and butter—that is, economic security—uppermost in mind, is no guarantee that such a search will, for this reason, be more effective. Let us assume that for some people there is a certain degree of conflict between a love of such things as art, science, group meliorism—or even a general search for wisdom and insight—on the one hand, and on the other hand the demands of a practical world in which they must earn their daily bread. Practical-minded people may advise a young man against devoting too much time and energy to impractical matters, and most of all against selecting a career with such concerns chiefly in mind. Be practical. Don't live in an ivory tower. Think of bread and butter first, and leave these more ethereal values until later leisure years.

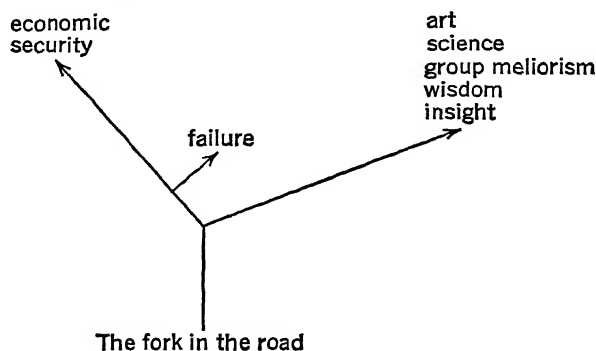
Such advice is prudent for many young men. It involves, however, the bread-and-butter fallacy, if it is taken to mean that an increased attention to practical matters at the expense of all wider interests is any guarantee that economic security or great business success will thereby be achieved. In some cases, a young man who abandons every other interest in favour of the search for economic security and professional success may wake up some morning to discover that he has failed to gain his ends, and that meanwhile he has permanently lost whatever chance he may have had to enjoy and appreciate the more intangible values of art, science, philosophy, etc. He may find that some

less practical person has not only hosts of valuable experiences which he himself has deliberately scorned and abandoned, but also bread and butter.¹

TOIL VERSUS WORK

Another distinction which a wise person will bear in mind, in choosing a career, is the difference between work and toil. Like play, work is a form of active participation in an environment of persons and objects. In both cases, a person may be said to put "himself" into what he is doing. While in play a person is usually less constrained by the rules or conditions of the game, nevertheless even in work a person's participation in his environment is to a considerable measure self-imposed. Just as John's conduct on the football field is rigidly governed by the rules of the game, since John is a fair player, so his behaviour in his position in a shop is determined by the needs of his employer and the demands of the task. In both cases, however, he chooses to restrict his conduct to the nature of the environment, and his deeds are to a great degree an expression of this choice. Indeed, work and play may to a large extent become identical. Tom Sawyer's management of the job of whitewashing the fence shows how the same activity may be

¹ This conflict may be likened to coming to a fork in a road. The persons who choose the left fork forget the possibility of failure.



considered to be the most arduous labour or the most exciting play, depending solely upon the attitude of the person.

In opposition to both work and play—which are, after all, both forms of *participation* in an environment—toil (as also idleness) involves a kind of aloofness from an environment. The difference between work and toil is more than a state of mind. In work a person participates in the given task, even if to some extent he is constrained to do so by factors beyond his will. Such participation can therefore be creative—the projection of one's self into the activity. On the other hand, in toil the external constraint is so great, and the type of activity so uncongenial, that the person does not participate at all in what he is doing. Work is not so exhaustive that a person's interest completely flags. Toil is likely to be completely exhaustive, partly because so little interest is possible. Work is never so entirely slavish and monotonous that active interest and participation are completely expelled. Toil is always slavish and monotonous.

The line between work and toil is not always easy to draw. As Dr. J. G. Hibben once said, one's interest follows one's attention. It is a grave mistake for a man, particularly a young man, to assume that a vocation which he finds uninteresting at the outset is therefore one which would become and remain a matter of toil for him. By taking such an attitude a person may too hastily abandon a vocation in which he would later take an intense interest. The interest of human beings, especially young people, is sufficiently flexible, and with the years sufficiently changeable, to be capable of eventually becoming attached to anything to which attention has been paid long enough. A person is especially likely to become interested in a vocation in which he has gained some degree of skill.

In a drab, workaday world it is a blessing for many people that interest follows attention as much as it does. Because of this fact, no life seems to remain one of pure toil. Yet some types of labour are so slavish and monotonous that a person becomes "interested" in them only by blotting out the very faculties of

mind upon which all ethical living is based. The wise person will recognize the importance of choosing a vocation which is relatively free from toil, and likewise his obligation to seek to make this kind of career available to as many persons in his community as possible.

A PERSON'S "HEROES" IN HIS CHOICE OF A CAREER

A person's choice of a career is to some extent determined by the types of work which he is able to envisage. He is able to discriminate and evaluate only to the extent that he is able to notice likenesses and differences among various competing sets of alternatives. Consequently the range of careers that he "sees" will to some degree determine the nature of his choice. You are like the spirit that you can grasp, Goethe once said. In choosing a career, this rather enigmatic statement might be construed to mean that you are capable of becoming only the kind of person whose character and pattern of life you are able to envisage and eventually to imitate and appreciate.

A young child imitates the persons around it. The young boy is able to "grasp" or understand the activities of the driver of a tram-car, and unhesitatingly declares that he will make the driving of such a car his later profession. He imitates what he sees, and makes his future plans accordingly. Many young people, almost without realizing it, are destined for a specific career because they see a parent or older friend in that career and imitate the older person in their plans. They intend to enter the only career that they have "grasped" or envisaged. In some cases, such imitation becomes a matter of deliberate hero-worship. In others, the imitation is less deliberate.

When a young person goes away from home to school or college, he frequently encounters for the first time new, different, and competing types of "heroes." One of the major results of higher education should be to acquaint the student with a wider range of characters and types of life than he otherwise would encounter. Professional training is designed for those persons

who assumedly already know what vocation they plan to adopt. The other three main types of higher education proceed, however, upon the assumption that a student is interested or potentially interested in something other than specialized training. One of the main, indirect results of the scientific type of education is to display to the student a picture of the lives of men of science, and in this way possibly to give him another set of potential heroes. The same thing is true of group meliorism in education; the student not only becomes aware of the need for a betterment of conditions in the social arena but he finds himself becoming acquainted with the lives of men who have devoted their full time and zeal to such matters. Again his range of heroes becomes expanded. Finally, by its very nature a liberal or humanistic education has as one of its results the expansion of the types of lives envisaged by the student to include the characters and activities of men of the widest possible variety. In these different kinds of education, the student becomes to some degree acquainted with the lives and activities of such persons as Newton and Darwin, Pasteur and Jane Addams, Motley, Keats, Beethoven, Kant, etc. For many people a glimpse of such figures is all they will ever get; for others, however, that glimpse is enough to raise the imitative desire to such a pitch that the influence of all earlier heroes is effaced.

THE TECHNIQUES OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

In various communities, agencies have been established under the auspices of the political authorities, the schools, or private philanthropic organizations, with the specific purpose of “assisting the individual to choose an occupation, prepare for it, enter upon and progress in it.” This entire process is called “vocational guidance.” It includes (a) a careful study of the individual and his past environment, (b) an investigation of the various types of occupation, including the factor of the need for men in each, and (c) a process of “counselling” carried on either in classes or individually. The study of the individual

takes into account "his physical condition, educational achievements, intelligence, special abilities, and interests in relation to the corresponding requirements of the occupation and the opportunities it offers."² An attempt is made to determine a person's interests, by taking a sample of an expressed interest and comparing it with the known interest of persons in a specific career. A man who is known to like competitive sports is more apt to become interested in law than in accounting. In addition, various aptitude tests are used to discover indications of a person's future abilities in specific lines, while trade tests reveal his present proficiency in a type of work in which he has had experience.

As might be expected, there has been greater success in individual, vocational guidance than in aid to groups. Similarly, various vocational tests have proved more effective in selecting a person for a particular position than in determining his general interests and abilities. Consequently the techniques of vocational guidance must be viewed as valuable tools to assist a person in choosing a career, but never as a substitute for individual discrimination and evaluation. The wise person will welcome the advice of vocational specialists, but he will refuse to consider such advice as in any sense final.

MARRIAGE

Among the various situations in personal life, marriage is one of the most important in relation to wisdom in conduct. Not only are a person's character and general attitudes affected by marriage, but a whole segment of his personal life becomes determined by this major human relationship. As with friendship, marriage is one of the few ethical situations which gives one human being an opportunity to gain some measure of experience of the inner life or personality of another.

There is no right answer to the question of whether or not a

² National Vocational Guidance Association, "The Principles and Practices of Educational and Vocational Guidance," *Vocational Guidance Magazine*, May 1937, p. 4.

person should marry. For many persons a single life, with a career, friendships, art, science, political and group melioristic activities, will involve a fulness which is as great as, or at least quite incommensurate with, the values of married life. As impossible as a life of chastity may be for some persons, for others such a life may be quite wise. The Garden of Eden is a place to walk in prayerfully, but some temperaments are doubtless quite at home there. On the other hand, as foolish as a life of extra-marital sexual relations is for many people, with the chance that love will pass over into lust alone, there are doubtless some persons—such as George Eliot and Lewes—whose unmarried love does not readily lend itself to the label of un wisdom, except by the most uncompromising dogmatists. For some persons the two women in Titian's "Sacred and Profane Love" will suggest a sharp contrast between chastity and sensuality; for others the difference is lost in the deeper likeness between the two persons.

While, therefore, it does not follow that everyone ought to marry, yet for most people matrimony doubtless is a wise step. Precisely because most people, like Botticelli's angels, hover somewhere between heaven and earth, marriage is and probably will remain a relation that is at once spiritual and earthly. To try to banish all sensual pleasure from marriage will for most people mean from the outset to strain for the impossible. On the other hand, to ground marriage exclusively upon the sensual side will mean to strip even from that sensual side the spiritual meaning of which it can become to a remarkable extent the form and expression. Even on the uncertain assumption that sensuality by itself is valueless, spiritual love may nevertheless be richer in its very spirituality because of a sensual accompaniment. In this instance, zero plus one equals two. Sensuality (alone possibly of no value) plus spirituality (alone of one unit of value) equals married love with two units of value.³ Permanent monogamous marriage is for most people

³ Cf. G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge, and Macmillan, 1903, pp. 203-07.

the sole channel through which such values can be realized.

According to the defenders of inward spirituality as the sole locus of ethical value, nothing in human marriage can be considered to be significant. According to Lao-tse, family affections, devotion, love, etc., pale in importance when compared with the sublime world-Reason, or *Tao*. Such feelings mark a condition of degeneracy from which the wise man will seek to escape. According to Koheleth, any search for marital happiness is mere vanity and vexation of spirit. According to Tolstoi, marital fidelity is imperative, but everything connected with family life is trivial as compared with preparing one's soul for eternal life in the bosom of God. In all of these views, nothing in a human marriage is considered to be significant *qua* human. None of the little human weaknesses, none of the hopes and fears and dreams which characterize the specifically personal in marriage, retain any meaning. All signs of love and devotion, so intimately bound up with physical manifestations and even sensuality, are to be looked upon as merely so much pettiness and lust. Everything valuable in marriage is reduced without remainder to a kind of spirituality which excludes not only every phase of external, material well-being, but even private, personal happiness.

On the other hand, the defenders of the thesis that the group is the sole locus of ethical value reduce marriage to a mere segment of group life. Hegel, accepting marriage as one of the cornerstones of the civic community and hence of the state, nevertheless is emphatic that family values are superseded by higher and finer values in being related to the state. Marx attacks the values of the family as so much bourgeois claptrap. Comte finds personal, family values to be selfish save as related to the worship of humanity. According to all these views, whatever value marriage may have (if it have any at all) derives chiefly from the wider and deeper values lying in society. More recently, the eugenists, harking back to Plato, assure us that we owe it to the race to breed better and finer types of chil-

dren. According to all of the apostles of group values, the problems of human marriage, and most particularly the problem of having children, should be considered chiefly in relation to the welfare of a group; namely, the state, the race, or humanity. Anyone who dares claim that some personal, family matters are of greater spiritual significance than any of these group concerns is at once labelled individualistic and selfish. Family values are to be treated as primarily matters of political science, sociology, eugenics, or working-class tactics.

The problems of human marriage cannot be wisely solved if either of these two extreme conceptions is exclusively followed. The life of inward spirit is one of the major poles of human conduct, the other of which lies in the external realm of physical, bodily goods and group relations. Marriage illustrates these two poles quite clearly. Most marriages involve, indeed, inward, spiritual aspects, and may be suspected to consist chiefly of these. Yet they involve also external group relations. However painful the fact may be to the defenders of the theory of inward spirituality, human marital love is, and seems destined to remain, a composite of the spiritual and the sensual. Furthermore, external well-being, including some property and physical possessions, while not forming the essence of a happy marital life, would seem to be among its indispensable accidents. The married couple who aim to live wisely and well over a sufficiently long period of years to achieve happiness need, first of all, the kind of inward excellence which is doubtless mainly spiritual. In addition, however, they must also be duly furnished with external goods. Such a condition today involves for most married couples an income deriving from the career of the husband (although possibly also of the wife). It implies a due concern by the family for the wider conditions of political and group living which form the basis for such an income. It includes also a wider interest on the part of the family in the laws of the society, its political life, and various group-melioristic activities. For many families, such wider interests cannot

pass over into active participation in political and humanitarian activities; the career must come first. For others, the very interest in these wider matters is identical with activities in connection with them. In any event, exclusive preoccupation with the inward spiritual life, even within the marriage, is not enough.

On the other hand, any attempt to explain the values of married life exclusively, or even chiefly, in terms of external values is an even greater distortion of the facts. A marriage based exclusively upon sensual relations (however normal and continuous) would probably not last very long. If it did continue for any great length of time, there would be little chance that it would retain an exclusively sensual basis. A life of such limited external well-being might be all very well from the point of view of modern eugenics; it could hardly be called virtuous in the Aristotelian sense, or wise. Also a pair of human beings who married solely or even chiefly because their nation-state exhorted or constrained them to do so might make ideal citizens in a well-regulated authoritarian commonwealth. They might produce many fine, strapping, young citizens for army work or other activities of the state. Every pretence of inward spirituality and excellence, however, would be lacking in such a marriage. Also a pair of Marxian comrades whose marriage was but an incident in the wider press of revolutionary work (or after the revolution in continued social work on behalf of the communistic society) would doubtless find in their marriage the kind of values they were seeking. We may wonder, however, whether such a marriage would involve much inward excellence if they remained totally absorbed in their wider group aims. It does not follow that persons who marry in accordance with the precepts of the eugenicist, the authoritarian legislator, or the Marxian, cannot and do not find a deep meaning in their married life. They would seem to do so, however, never because of such precepts but in spite of them. A couple who marry solely or chiefly because of the exhortations of the

eugenists to think of their race, may lead a happy married life because they discover in their relations to each other and to their children a deep, spiritual meaning, the eugenist's motive to the contrary notwithstanding. A couple who marry solely or chiefly because of the command of a legislator or overseer may find happiness in the marriage for the same reason, in spite of the legislator's motives. A couple who marry, imbued with a Marxian loyalty to the working class, may find that, contrary to the tenets of their official political views, they discover a spiritual meaning in their private life together. Happy marriages are of a sufficiently varied pattern to be possible in a society controlled by eugenists, an authoritarian state, or a Marxian group, but in such cases personal love and devotion burst the bonds of social theories.

As Aristotle said, the man of moral excellence may not be a happy man, for external circumstances may intervene, but the happy man is always a man of moral excellence. Similarly, the strongest bond of love and affection between husband and wife—with its spiritual aspect counting more than the sensual—is no assurance of a happy marriage. Without some such tie, however, every external advantage, every favourable economic, political, and social circumstance, will be impotent to bring about marital happiness. But Aristotle was careful to restrict his description of inward excellence to the most general considerations. Similarly, the type of inward spiritual relation between husband and wife must not be expected to fit any one fixed formula. In general, however, just as moral excellence is, in Aristotle's opinion, something learned, and requiring habitual practice to keep, so the kind of devotion which is indispensable to a happy married life is something actively to be won, and requiring continuing effort to retain. Careful discrimination and evaluation must be its basis, and the believers in inward spirituality are doubtless nearer the truth when they call it the life of the soul than is any theory which would guide its development solely or chiefly in terms of the welfare

of the state, the working class, or the eugenist's ideal of a superb race. Whether, from the fact of such a condition of inward excellence or spirituality, any conclusions about supernatural religion may be drawn, is quite another question. Not yet understanding the natural, how can we, as Confucius asked, expect to understand the supernatural?

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

Just as for some people an unmarried life involves values as great as, or at least quite incommensurate with, the values of married life, so for some married people the absence of children is compatible with many of the highest values of married life and of life in general—love, careers, a home, friends, etc. On the other hand, the entry of children into a family means new problems and an alteration of some phases of family life. Aside from the responsibilities of upbringing and the problems of character development, many of which can be avoided by having nurses, pre-kindergarten play schools, etc., there are certain more general changes which children may bring about in the marriage itself. Before the coming of children, marital love was primarily between two, and in this way there was a kind of correspondence and co-ordination of the spiritual and sensual sides. The arrival of children, however, expands and redirects the affections of the parents, probably, in most cases, chiefly of the mother. For those theorists who envisage a sharp cleavage in human affections between love and lust, between spirituality and sensuality, the affection of parents for children presents a difficult problem. Is such affection completely lacking in any bodily manifestations? Sensuality is obviously lacking. Yet can the feelings of tenderness, sympathy, pity, etc., be considered as wholly non-physical? In parental love we have a clear illustration of the extent to which even the bodily concomitants of emotions can become spiritualized.

The significance of parenthood is quite great in relation to the whole sphere of a person's conduct. William James men-

tions the bohemian who lives from day to day, the family man who guides his life in terms of a wide span of years, and the philosopher or sage who lives for eternity. What precisely does a parent live for, if he evaluates his own personal aims in relation to his hopes for his children? This question is a difficult one for a person with a chiefly negative ethics to answer. Marriage in itself can, and should, be for most people a typical non-preventive, non-remedial undertaking. There are endless problems which even childless marriages raise. In a family with children, "security" as a tangible goal is even more difficult to conceive. Even if a parent has provided his children with a home, careful schooling, money, life insurance, medical attention, etc., do these things represent all that he desires for them? If the parent has himself lived as wisely and well as possible, can his happiness be said to be complete while any doubts remain concerning the future character and conduct of his children? What assurance has he that unforeseen, external circumstances may not upset his best efforts, not so much by harming him directly, as by harming his children? Aristotle, as we have found,⁴ specifically raised such questions concerning the nature of a happy life.

Marriage itself multiplies by two the number of characters which become intimately bound up with a person's conduct. Parenthood multiplies this number still further. Most parents cannot and do not want to separate their own lives from those of their children; the children's characters are adopted and accepted as their own, as well as the children's deeds and misdeeds. Due to the relative sameness of age of the husband and wife, their courses of life are more or less parallel in time. Young manhood and young womanhood, maturity, and old age are experienced together. In relation to their children, this is not the case. The parent is an adult when the child faces his childhood problems. The parent is an old man when the son is a young one. The parent realizes that many of the most per-

⁴ Cf. above, pp. 230-32.

plexing problems in the life of the child may and probably must be faced after he, the parent, is gone. Possibly few parents consider such matters beyond some provisions for the later economic security of the children, and a vague hope that everything will go well with them later in life. For some parents, however, a concern for the children's future will tend to cast a shadow of tentativeness upon all their own failures and achievements.

FRIENDSHIP

Aristotle held that friendship is based upon a mutual affection between two persons of which each of them is aware. The motives back of such affection may be any one of three: A person may love his friend for what he is, or for pleasure which he may give, or for some use which he may serve. These are the friendships of virtue, pleasure, and utility. The two latter types are apt to be quite temporary, since the friend may cease to be a source of pleasure or to be useful. However, when a person values his friend and wishes him well for his own sake, and when these feelings are reciprocated, there is true friendship. This kind is of a permanent sort. Such friendships are rare, and cannot be built in a day. Like other forms of excellence, they are the result of practice. While not necessarily living under the same roof, the friends must live together in the sense that they see a great deal of each other. They must not only have a disposition towards friendship, but also must habitually do friendly acts. Prolonged separation not only destroys the disposition but makes the requisite friendly acts impossible even when the disposition is still there. Only between two persons of moral excellence or virtue can this truest kind of friendship exist. Like other aspects of a life of well-being and well-doing, such friendship will be pleasant, but pleasure will not be its motive or basis. Friendships of utility are friendships of sordid souls.

Anticipating a charge of inconsistency, Aristotle raises the question of whether a happy man, being most self-sufficient,

will really need friends. With the possible exception of the man who is leading a life of pure contemplation, whom Aristotle does not consider in this connection, his answer is unhesitatingly in the affirmative. The happy man has not only inward moral excellence but also external goods. Would it not be strange, Aristotle asks, to consider him as lacking friends "which are thought to be the greatest of all external goods"? The happy man is not a solitary being; as a virtuous man he will need other persons to whom he can do good, upon whom he can confer benefits. The most obvious objects of such actions will be people whom he knows to be most deserving of them. Such persons will be friends rather than strangers or casual acquaintances. The happy man does not need friends for motives of utility or pleasure. Yet happiness is an active exercise of our faculties which comes only over a period of time, and not all at once. Only the exercise of these faculties in a certain fashion makes happiness possible. Because of its permanent nature, friendship offers a person a chance both to make his own friendly acts habitual and to contemplate such acts on the part of the friend.

Francis Bacon's theory of friendship is frankly utilitarian. Joys are doubled, and sorrows halved, he says, if we can share them with a friend. Friendship implies perfect confidence; we may unburden ourselves completely to a friend. In addition, our opinions of ourselves are apt to be biassed in our own favour. A friend supplies the necessary corrective, the dry light of critical analysis of ourselves and our problems. Furthermore, a friend enables us to formulate our own thoughts more clearly than we could alone. We may not know what we are actually thinking until a friend gives us an opportunity to formulate it. Finally, a friend is able to do many things for us which we could not do for ourselves. Praise for ourselves which in our own mouths would be quite unbecoming can come with due propriety from a friend.

Ralph Waldo Emerson conceives of friendship as an ideal

relation between two deep, and essentially unfathomable, spiritual natures constantly hampered by the friction involved in their actual, more or less trivial, encounters with each other.

Dear Friend:

If I was sure of thee, sure of thy capacity, sure to match my mood with thine, I should never think again of trifles in relation to thy comings and goings. I am not very wise; my moods are quite attainable; and I respect thy genius; it is to me as yet unfathomed; yet dare I not presume in thee a perfect intelligence of me, and so thou art to me a delicious torment. Thine ever, or never.⁵

WISDOM IN PERSONAL CONDUCT: GENERAL CONCLUSION

Ethical wisdom is essentially the possession of an individual. Consequently differences in human characters and dispositions will always result in corresponding differences in wise conduct. There can be no one formula, however exactly stated, which will describe all wise men. Nevertheless the essence of wisdom in conduct is thoughtful practice in those situations which have greatest significance in a person's life viewed as a whole. Therefore, to the extent that certain problem-situations are common to many men, the wisdom or foolishness of their lives will be similar. If childhood growth and play, lower-school life, higher education, vocational problems, marriage, parenthood, and friendship carry deep implications for the general character and conduct of human beings, these problem-situations contain major challenges to wise conduct. The person who meets these issues squarely, keeping his eye upon the total situation, including the other people concerned, and applying the results of reflective evaluation to his deeds over a considerable period of time, may be said to have achieved wisdom in personal life. This kind of wisdom is one of the two major concerns of ethics, the other being a parallel kind of excellence in group life. This latter type must now be considered.

⁵ R. W. Emerson, *Complete Works*, Bell, 1879, I, p. 84.

CHAPTER X

TYPES OF NEGATIVE SITUATIONS IN GROUP LIFE

GROUP SITUATIONS IN GENERAL

NO individual can completely ignore problems of group living. Directly or indirectly, in one way or another, everyone is affected by wider problems relating to his nation-state, his local community, his profession, his economic class, schools, churches, trades-unions, the press, etc. We turn now to certain major problems in modern life which centre chiefly in the lives of groups of individuals. Some of these problems, such as poverty or crime, are identical with corresponding problems in personal life, but will be treated now in their wider group contexts. No individual will face directly in his own life all of the problems which we shall now discuss. Every individual, however, is in some way affected by the existence of these problems in the lives of groups of persons around him. Anyone whose aim is to live wisely and well must give serious attention to such problems. In this chapter we shall be concerned with negative situations, those requiring primarily prevention and remedy. Wise group living in relation to such matters will be more or less identical with prudence. The following chapter will deal with more positive ends, requiring a type of wisdom which passes beyond a prudent escape from evils.

GROUP POVERTY

Widespread poverty in a community or nation-state is an evil which enlightened individuals in that group are anxious to prevent and remedy. While for some people poverty may point the way to heaven, as in the case of Saint Francis of Assisi, any well-to-do persons who use such an argument to justify a neglect of the unfortunate persons in their community are

guilty of selfishness and hypocrisy in their own careers here on earth. Also, no community can afford to neglect the poverty-stricken on the ground that their presence is a necessary result of the high tensions of civilization.

In modern times, group poverty is to a large degree synonymous with widespread unemployment. Consequently, to some degree the task of removing poverty is the same as the task of creating a larger community income with more jobs available. Ideally speaking, there is no conflict between this aim and a retention of wealth by those who already possess it. The search for a *redistribution* of wealth presupposes that the ideal of more for the poor, and more—or at least no less—for the rich is in some measure impossible. All private charity and government relief measures are ways of redistributing wealth. By private charity, wealth is transferred directly from those who have it to those who have not. Under various governmental plans, the money comes from the pockets of the taxpayers and finds its way to the hands of the unemployed in several ways: (a) Under the *dole*, the unemployed man receives money directly for no work done; (b) in the cases of work-relief jobs, the government undertakes types of work for which it hires and pays the unemployed worker; (c) in still other cases, the government undertakes various other projects—the building of roads, bridges, sanitation systems, school-houses, etc.—and employs persons who are not necessarily taken from the ranks of the unemployed. In this way the money paid for raw materials, wages, etc., passes into circulation, business and industry improve, and more jobs become available. Eventually the money for all such governmental plans comes from the taxpayer.

In most major industrial countries the relief of the poor and unemployed by private charities alone is pretty generally recognized as haphazard and inadequate. Each of the three governmental plans has something in its favour. (a) While the direct *dole* is quite demoralizing for the unemployed person, it costs the government (*i.e.*, the taxpayer) less than any other

plan, and does not operate to bring governmentally paid persons into competition with private industrial workers. Because of the harm to the morale of the unemployed, this plan would seem to be prudent only when the financial condition of the government makes it essential to spend as little as possible.

(b) Work-relief jobs undertaken by the government itself have the happy effect of keeping the morale of the worker high. Yet many unemployed are unskilled workers, and, of necessity, the type of work which they can perform for the government is restricted in scope and is at times of highly questionable value. Also, this plan is considerably more costly than the dole. When the government is sufficiently solvent to be able to afford the luxury of relatively costly expenditures for relatively valueless work, governmental work-relief is prudent, because it gives a maximum number of persons the psychological advantage of being employed.

(c) More general governmental spending, chiefly to put more money into circulation without directly employing only needy persons, has the advantage of yielding fruits that are of great value to the community—school-houses, roads, sanitary systems, etc.—and of stimulating the various industries involved in such projects. Its chief disadvantage lies in possibly high costs to the taxpayer and possibly a detrimental effect upon business as a whole. Any artificial spur to industry and commerce makes them increasingly dependent upon such prodding. Just as a man who swims with a life belt may find it difficult to remain afloat without one, so the industry of a country which has become dependent upon governmental spending may find itself incapable of carrying on under its own power. This third method requires a very sound monetary system and a healthy industry. The threat of insolvency would force a government to resort entirely to the dole. All these plans depend upon the financial soundness of the government, which means the power of the taxpayer's pocketbook; but they are necessary and prudent so long as unemployment cannot be lessened in any other way.

In addition to attempts to alleviate group poverty by redistributing group income and wealth, there are more specific steps, both preventive and remedial, which can be taken to solve the problem. The first of these measures is the prevention of procreation by persons who are hereditarily unfit. Among the poverty-stricken of many cities and nation-states there are persons whose incompetence (and perhaps criminality) is the outcome of hereditary feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, or mental disease. The children of such persons are almost certain to swell the ranks of the unemployed and the poverty-stricken. By rigid marriage laws, the facilitation of birth control, the segregation and sterilization of such persons, an important step would be taken to solve the problem of future group poverty.

In the second place, many persons fall into poverty and unemployment because of preventable and curable physical illnesses and diseases. Injuries, deformities, amputations, and paralysis comprise a number of such handicaps, as well as eye and ear disorders, heart, blood, and lung diseases. Measures which prevent such troubles, or serve to remedy them once they have occurred, serve to lessen group poverty.

Thirdly, while weakness of character, laziness, incompetence, and recklessness are found in the lives of many persons who have had every educational and economic advantage, nevertheless something can be done to alleviate poverty by the spread of more effective vocational education among more people.

Fourthly, slum clearance, better housing conditions, more healthy food for more people, better and more widespread medical attention, all tend not only to alleviate present distress and poverty but to remove conditions which are apt to generate these evils.

Lastly, there are the various forms of group insurance designed to protect persons against (a) unemployment, (b) illness, (c) accidents, and (d) old age. These plans vary in aim, scope, and effectiveness, and involve hosts of difficulties peculiar

to the type of protection they are designed to afford. Through the co-operation of employers, employés, and the government (local or national or both) small sums of money are set aside, in some countries, for the payment of regular sums to the employé who loses his position, or who becomes incapacitated because of illness, accidents, or old age. In some cases the plan includes payments to a widowed mother with dependent children. The weakness in such plans is that in many cases they barely assure subsistence, while (in the cases of sickness and unemployment) they may be misused by the recipients in order to continue unnecessarily in a condition of economic dependence. All such measures are, however, prudent and necessary ways of combatting group poverty and its attendant evils. A nation or community that concerned itself with such matters only would not thereby be living wisely and well. Yet without attention to these problems it would be living foolishly indeed.

THE MISUSES OF MODERN INDUSTRY

Closely bound up with the problems of poverty and unemployment are certain other effects of our modern industrial civilization which must be considered as major group evils. In the first place, many persons, while not unemployed or poverty-stricken, receive such small or intermittent wages that they are in constant danger of being unable to keep body and soul together. Modern employers range from the completely callous type who are willing to hire the cheapest labour and to pay it as little as possible, to the enlightened persons who sincerely strive to pass along as great a portion of the profits of the industry or business as is compatible with successful management. As Jane Addams points out, there is a sharp difference between the individual benevolence of an employer and his attitude towards his employés when he considers them as a factor in his business or industrial enterprise. As an individual, he may have the warmest regard for the welfare of his employés, and may even take steps to provide them, in pater-

nalistic fashion, with decent living quarters, pleasant surroundings, etc. The factor of wages, however, is too closely linked with the general problem of business or industrial profits to admit of treatment in terms of personal ethics. Realizing clearly when the market for his products is good that there is a need for labour and a justification for high wages, he employs many men and pays them well. These actions, however, are not benevolent, but expedient. When, on the other hand, times are hard and the market is contracted, the employer expects quite naturally to be able to dismiss labourers, to pay lower wages, and in other ways to meet the situation. If an employer at such a time expects his employ  s to accept their dismissals or wage cuts humbly because they proceed from a personally benevolent man, he is confusing personal ethics with business principles. Just as he does not pay high wages because of benevolence but for service rendered, so his employ  s are justified in considering his reduction of their wages as quite unrelated to his own personal feelings. The workers are therefore justified in exercising every possible influence to resist a reduction of wages, quite apart from their personal friendliness towards their employer. If the employer is forced to raise or reduce wages, apart from his personal feelings, so the workers are justified in seeking to obtain such raises, or to resist such reductions, quite apart from *their* personal feelings. The most obvious means which workers can use is collective bargaining through unions. Only by co-operative action can they be assured that their standard of wages will not be wholly dependent upon the caprice of an employer. Only by the acceptance of the principle of collective bargaining can a society avoid a completely paternalistic type of industry, if not of government as well.

The right of collective bargaining on the part of workers implies the right to go on strike. Just as the individual employer has the right to dismiss workers or even to close his business, if, in his opinion, economic considerations make such a step necessary, so groups of workers have the right collectively to leave

their work, for the same reason. It is idle to contend that every worker should be given the right to choose for himself. The very effectiveness of collective bargaining requires the action of the employ  s as a unit. Just as a group of individual employers in a company may agree to abide by the decision of a majority in managing the company, so a group of workers may act according to the decision of their own majority. If this principle is not followed, the workers can exercise little or no influence in seeking higher wages. When a majority decides to go on strike, the minority must co-operate, if the principle of collective bargaining is to be more than a phrase.

But strikes are costly. The workers are temporarily without any wages at all; the industry or business loses profits. Also, considerable ill-will is apt to be generated. Possibly there will be bloodshed and the destruction of property, and if the strike is large enough the community in general suffers economically. For all of these reasons, strikes are obviously imprudent measures except as a last resort. Modern communities face the task of creating effective political machinery for dealing impartially with industrial disputes. If possible, employers and workers should be brought to agree to the findings of such an impartial group. Quite apart from the merits of either side of a disagreement, the employers always have an enormous tactical advantage over the workers. The employer is not personally threatened with poverty or suffering, and he can resort to the dismissal of workers, or can even close his factory. To offset this power, the workers must retain the right to strike. The task of governmental machinery is to find a sufficiently just solution of the problem to prevent either side from deciding to resort to measures which will injure the other. In cases where the community is threatened by too great harm at the hands of either party, the government is justified in taking a firmer stand. To do so in less serious cases is to threaten the community with political despotism.

A second evil connected with modern industry concerns the

nature of working conditions and the length of working hours. "Whereas the artistic or inventive, or even the professional man, is constantly doing something new, the labourer continually repeats the same act or set of acts, in order to produce a number of similar products. The success of most labour consists in the exactitude and pace with which this repetition can be carried on."¹ Experiments have revealed the enormous muscular and nervous strain which overwork, particularly an excess of monotonous labour, brings with it. A maximum of accidents in industry has been found to occur towards the end of the period of labour before luncheon time, and towards the end of the day. A manufacturer of wringing machines was forced to institute shorter working hours during the War of 1914-1918, and found to his surprise that there was a greater output under the shorter working time than before. Also, the health and safety of workers require that they be protected in every way possible from harmful working conditions. Poor ventilation, injurious dust, inadequate lighting, dampness, excessive fluctuations in temperature, gases, fumes, irritating chemicals, and poor sanitation, are all factors which cause accidents, illness, and death.² Maximum working-hour requirements and rules governing working conditions should be adopted by modern industries both in the interest of efficiency and from humanitarian motives. To the extent that industries fail to do so, governmental machinery must step in.

Another evil connected with modern industry is child labour. Jane Addams tells of a child boarding a tram-car to sell newspapers. A complacent, self-made man buys a paper, possibly pleased to help the lad make his way in the world. He recognizes the values that he has come to appreciate. A philanthropic lady thinks what a shame it is that the little fellow is not in school, and plans to redouble her charitable efforts to provide for newsboys' homes, education, etc. Her aims are laudable,

¹ Hobson, *Work and Wealth*, Allen, Unwin, 1914, p. 61.

² Gillin *et al.*, *Social Problems*, Century, 1928, pp. 320-21.

but the scope of their effectiveness is highly restricted. A working man with a knowledge of trades-union methods sees the newspaper boy in a wider perspective. "He knows very well that he can do nothing in the way of ameliorating the lot of this particular boy; that his only possible chance is to agitate for proper child-labour laws; to regulate, and if possible prohibit, street vending by children, in order that the child of the poorest may have his school time secured to him, and may have at least his short chance of growth."³ Fortunately, since Miss Addams's day the recognition of the principle of legal regulation of child labour has become widespread in many communities, though not without the stoutest opposition. Such regulation ought to take the form of an age minimum of sixteen years in any occupation whatsoever, eighteen years in employment in and about mines and quarries, and twenty-one years in dangerous, unhealthy, or hazardous occupations. It ought to involve an educational minimum, allowing employed youths to continue their schooling during part of the day. It ought also to require all prospective working youths to pass a test of physical fitness. Finally, there should be maximum hours of employment and a minimum wage standard.⁴

GROUP ILLNESS

Widespread illnesses of various sorts in a group of people, a rural community, a nation-state, or a city is an evil which ought to be prevented and remedied. Dostoevski tells us that his own epileptic fits were preceded by periods of intense mental clarity in which he was able to do some of his best writing. Nietzsche, himself by no means a healthy person, glorifies illness as a source of insight. Some people hold that illness, like poverty and crime, is a by-product of higher types of civilization; the presence of large groups of unfit people is a sign of the tense environment in which positive values are being

³ Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, Macmillan, 1907, p. 169.

⁴ Gillin, *op. cit.*, pp. 344-45.

achieved.⁵ In spite of these contentions, the prevention and remedy of sickness remains one of the major problems in group life.

In modern cities, in rural districts, and in nations, there are various professional groups whose main aim is the prevention and remedy of illness, but who, in addition, have the avowed purpose of using their activities to earn a living for themselves. The most important of these groups is the medical profession. Private charity workers seek to prevent and remove poverty, but they do not—and, in fact, they cannot—expect the persons who are helped to reward them by fees either small or great. Illness, however, comes to the wealthy as well as to the poor. The former group are willing to reward the person who aids them; and medicine is a relatively lucrative profession. With the rise of modern knowledge of human and animal physiology and pathology, the verification by Pasteur and others of the germ theory of disease, and continued progress in the use of preventive inoculations and vaccinations and remedial anti-toxins, modern medicine has become, fortunately, much more than merely a hit-and-miss proposition. Physicians have knowledge and techniques at their disposal which are highly effective, and which they have been able to acquire only by hard and discriminating study. Like any other application of knowledge to the problems of human living, the practice of medicine has never been free from the mistakes and failures arising from incompetence, selfishness, and even criminal negligence. Medical knowledge, like all knowledge, is no guarantee that the person using it is virtuous or wise.

For these reasons, the problems of prevention and remedy of illness in a community are closely linked with ethical considerations. These problems require careful discrimination, evaluation, and choice, by those persons who are interested in group health. Medical schools set high standards of knowledge and effort on the part of prospective physicians, and they further

⁵ H. Ellis, *The Dance of Life*, Houghton Mifflin, 1923, pp. 290-98.

medical research in every way possible. Rigid requirements are established by a city or state and enforced by the medical profession. In addition, the Hippocratic oath binds every physician to treat in strictest confidence all information given to him by patients. Other standards of conduct have been adopted by the medical profession, governing relations between individual physicians, the use of drugs, the patenting of new discoveries, advertising, etc.

In spite of these very laudable practices of the medical profession, much illness and disease has not yet found even the amount of effective preventive and remedial treatment which our modern knowledge makes possible. We must remember that, viewed in the light of centuries rather than decades, much modern medical knowledge is extremely recent. It would indeed be surprising if in most countries the effective application of the fruits of this knowledge to the greatest number of persons should have already been realized. In some cases, medical discoveries have been so striking that an immediate and almost universal application has resulted. For example, the discovery of the effectiveness of vaccination against smallpox was so remarkable, and—in the light of the sufferings of previous centuries—so important, that in many localities and lands the use of this knowledge has become compulsory. In the case of other important but less striking advances, such as the early treatment of certain functional disorders, no steps have yet been taken to assure the benefits of this knowledge to everyone. These lags in the application of medical knowledge, while not to be laid directly at the door of the medical profession, have persisted because no way has yet been devised to be sure that everyone who needs medical treatment can become aware of this fact and act accordingly. More specifically, the system of private fees to physicians has naturally tended to make most people of small means unable to take advantage of medical service which might entail heavy economic burdens.

In some localities and countries these difficulties have been

met by various plans designed to guarantee every possible advantage of medical treatment independently of a person's capacity to pay for it. Sickness insurance, private group health insurance with small regular payments, governmentally sponsored insurance with the same end, medical clinics for the poor, etc., are, all of them, attempts to meet a situation which has hitherto been dependent upon the individual unselfishness and generosity of private physicians. Like parallel attempts to alleviate poverty and to give groups of people security against unemployment and old age, these systems have been subject to abuses, one of the chief of which is malingering, the tendency of persons with no or little genuine illness to take advantage of the economic benefits of such plans. In addition, all these plans affect the system of private practice in two ways: They enable a relatively incompetent physician who is unable to build up a successful private practice to achieve economic security for himself as a salaried practitioner under a private or governmental group insurance plan, in spite of his incompetence, and, secondly, they reduce the clientele of the private practitioner, possibly of even the more competent ones.

In spite of these flaws in governmental and private systems of group medicine, these plans have been adopted in many localities and nation-states. The most adequate medical attention for the greatest number of people has been put before all other considerations. The flaws in group plans have not caused them to be discarded any more than certain parallel flaws in the system of private practice have caused its abandonment.

There is no reason why both systems cannot operate in a community side by side. Private practice with its aims and ideals ought to continue to flourish, but it should be supplemented by whatever group plans are necessary to bring the benefits of medical knowledge to the widest number of poor people. For persons who are rich or relatively well-to-do, the advantages of the advice and aid of a private physician of their

own choice will always outweigh all other considerations. Such a physician is likely to give the most effective attention to any individual case. Such cases form a pyramid, however, rising over and above the illnesses of poorer persons who are fortunate if they are able to get medical attention without the advantages of consulting a private physician. In their cases, some means can and ought to be taken to assure adequate medical care, apart from any question of cost. Some kind of group insurance, private or governmental, is best designed to achieve this end.

Back of all these considerations lies education. Even the wealthiest person, if not made to realize the need of attention to his health, periodic examinations, a prompt treatment of minor symptoms, etc., will not take advantage of any system of medical care, private or group. The need for prenatal clinics, careful obstetrical care for all, the treatment of childhood illnesses, and careful living, can be brought home to individuals only by a spread of knowledge in the schools and through other channels.

THE MISUSES OF LEGAL MACHINERY

Aristotle considered the task of the legislator to be twofold: The discovery of the nature of moral excellence and goodness for his city-state, and its achievement by means of wise laws. Both of these ends are essentially positive, creative, and non-remedial, involving the search for a basic feature of the well-being of a community or nation-state. In the following chapter, we shall deal briefly with the nature of government as the instrument of political well-being. Here we shall mention only two evils connected with political life: (a) The misuse of legal machinery, and (b) crime.

Just as the medical profession makes the prevention and remedy of illness a source of monetary gain, so the legal profession expects financial remuneration for its services in various suits, civil and criminal. Wealthy and poor people find them-

selves in legal difficulties of one sort or another, and the wealthy are able and willing to pay handsomely for competent legal advice and assistance. The poor are frequently unable to pay anything at all for legal aid. Many lawyers, looking upon their calling as an instrument to be used for the ends of justice, willingly devote their time and effort to aiding a poor person, knowing full well that there can be little or no financial reward. Lawyers at times are given a chance to earn a large fee by accepting a case the winning of which would involve a miscarriage of justice. Many of them unhesitatingly advise such a prospective client that he must look elsewhere for legal aid. In a word, many lawyers take their responsibilities as servants of justice quite seriously. The lawyer's oath in the State of Massachusetts says:

I solemnly swear that I will do no falsehood, nor consent to the doing of any in court; I will not wittingly or willingly promote or sue any false, groundless, or unlawful suit, nor give aid or consent to the same; I will delay no man for lucre or malice; but I will conduct myself in the office of any attorney within the courts according to the best of my knowledge and discretion and with all good fidelity as well to the courts as [to] my clients.⁶

In spite of the fact that most lawyers follow a high ethical code, some members of the profession unscrupulously place their own monetary gain before every other consideration. They undertake only cases which promise high monetary rewards, and are willing to try to win any case whatsoever, irrespective of its merits or the injustice involved. They invent defences for prisoners, practise deceit, distort the facts, or seek to embarrass an opponent by unjust delays, or motions upon a technicality for a new trial, and endless appeals. Sometimes, even if they lose a civil case, they make the whole procedure so costly for the opposing side that little or no money is actually recovered. In general, both in civil and criminal cases, some

⁶ Quoted by Moorfield Storey, *The Reform of Legal Procedure*, Yale, 1911, p. 30.

lawyers are willing to bend the course of justice in order to get a large fee from a wealthy client.

To the extent that lawyers justifiably or unjustifiably are forced to consider the lucrative aspect of their profession, poor or relatively poor people are at a disadvantage in the law courts. To the extent that lawyers unscrupulously consider their fees as the major end, any just litigant, rich or poor, may suffer. In the first case, the handicap of the poor man can in some measure be overcome by having an honest, independent judiciary and jury, and possibly by having some competent lawyer assigned to his case by the court. In the second case, the duty of the bench and the legal profession is to expose, if possible, the unscrupulous tactics of the lawyer, and to prevent him from further practice.

The effective administration of justice also depends upon the character and intelligence of the judges. Public-spirited men will, as did Confucius, consider their duty to entail the acceptance of a judgeship, apart from all matters of prestige or salary. In spite of this fact, judges should be paid salaries adequate to attract honest and capable men who might otherwise feel unable to accept such a position. Furthermore, permanent tenure, or at best a very long term, of office for judges aids the achievement of impartial justice. While the courageous, honest judge will remain quite uninfluenced by considerations of tenure, reappointment, or re-election, a certain independence of thought and attitude is promoted by freeing judges from the prospect of losing their positions, or by making such a prospect extremely infrequent. All long tenure must remain subject to impeachment for malfeasance in office, two major forms of which are accepting bribes, and "backstairs" influence, *i.e.*, listening to arguments outside of court concerning a case before the court.

In jury cases there is the chance that emotions will determine the decision. At times the sentiments of twelve normal citizens act as a healthy corrective to the reasonings of the judge or

the opposing attorneys. Piercing behind the veil of the arguments, the normal man may see the just answer, in a way that a specialist cannot. At other times, however, the sex, age, race, etc., of a plaintiff or defendant, or some other irrelevant issue, may cause the jury to render a very unfair verdict. The wise judge must do everything in his power to hinder such a decision.⁷

CRIME AS A GROUP PROBLEM

Crime, the punishable transgression of the laws of a community or state, is one of the most important group evils, and one which is most closely bound up with ethical considerations. Criminal behaviour is the overt action of an individual, yet it always involves complex sets of antecedent conditions—the heredity of the person, possibly including feeble-mindedness; his mental condition, perhaps quite abnormal; his physical condition, sometimes quite defective; his past environment and education; and his general economic status in the community, sometimes very low. While some persons commit serious criminal offences in spite of sound heredity, normality of mind and health of body, high intelligence, good education, and favourable economic circumstances, many offenders are deficient in one or several of these regards. Serious crimes are seldom unrelated to other group evils operating in the lives of the offenders. In addition to the complex conditions giving rise to a crime, there are many equally complicated developments which a criminal act brings in its wake. In the first place, other

⁷ In the *Shu King* there are the following instructions for criminal procedure: "It is not persons with crafty tongues who should try criminal cases, but persons who are really good, *whose judgements will exemplify the due mean*. Watch carefully for discrepancies in statements; the view you intended not to adopt, you may find reason to adopt. With pity and reverence determine the issues; painstakingly consult the penal code; give ear to all respecting the matter—to the end that your judgement may exemplify the due mean, whether in imposing a fine or other punishment, by careful investigation and the solution of every difficulty. When the trial has such an event, all will acknowledge that the judgement is just. . . . You pardon inadvertent faults, however great; and punish purposed crimes, however small. . . . Rather than put an innocent person to death, you will run the risk of irregularity and error." Miles M. Dawson, *The Ethics of Confucius*, Putnam's, 1915, pp. 235-36, quoting *Shu King*, *Book of History*, Part v, Book xxvii, 5; Part ii, Book ii, 2 (italics ours).

individuals—their property, persons, or both—have been injured. This fact may lead to retaliation by the injured persons or by governmental authorities. In theory at least, and to a large measure also in practice, private retaliation has been replaced in most communities by the belief that the law rather than the injured person should punish. The tendency of individuals in some communities to take the law into their hands bears witness, however, to the fact that the motive of private retaliation is still present, although it is seldom allowed to operate.⁸ Closely allied with the idea of retaliation is that of expiation. Punishment is inflicted upon the offender as a way in which he can make amends for his wrong action.

In addition, however, to the injury already inflicted upon innocent persons, a criminal act represents two potential, additional dangers. The fact of a crime is evidence that the same offender, whether under similar or different conditions, is potentially a repeating criminal. Whether his crime is a voluntary one—and much modern theoretical, criminological study has bitterly attacked the idea of free choice—or whether it is exclusively the result of some of the above-mentioned hereditary and environmental factors, the past conduct of the criminal offender is evidence that he may in the future offend again. This fact has given rise to the deterrent theory of punishment—penalties and punishment inflicted with the purpose of constraining the criminal not to persist in his harmful ways.

There is also a second, potential danger embodied in a criminal act. It provides a model for other individuals in the community to copy, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. A's knowledge of B's crime, along with its pleasant or painful consequences for B, may cause A deliberately or unreflectively to imitate it, to the harm of other individuals. Therefore, to bring home to other persons in the community the painful conse-

⁸ In the United States, 3,182 Negroes were lynched between 1885 and 1925. Cf. Gillin *et al.*, *Social Problems*, Century, 1928, p. 449.

quences of criminal actions, the offender is punished. This punishment has the deterrence of others as its motive.

Alongside of, and to some extent in opposition to, these purposes in punishment, there has arisen the tendency to examine crime not merely in relation to the complex set of antecedent hereditary and environmental conditions in the life of the offender, but also in relation to the same set of conditions as they will operate upon him after he has paid his penalty and returned to the community. Minimizing the importance of any so-called free choice of the criminal in the commission of the crime, modern criminologists have become convinced that the same factors—hereditary feeble-mindedness, mental abnormalities, disease, poverty, unemployment, etc.—which probably caused the crime in the first place are apt to be present after, and in spite of, the punishment, and to act with full force to produce additional offences. Indeed, there is much evidence that many punishments, far from deterring future acts by the same person, work in precisely the reverse fashion. Embittered (if not driven to insanity by solitary confinement), brutalized by life in a jail crowded with equally or more demoralized companions, convinced that justice has miscarried in his case, a criminal may return to the community determined simply to be more ruthless and cunning in his later misbehaviour. The difficulties, hereditary and environmental, which caused the first crime are enhanced by the fact of a criminal record. For example, a man may face poverty and discover that his past offence increases the difficulty in getting a job and earning an honest living. Because of these considerations, attempts have been made in modern communities to base punishment exclusively upon two interlocking purposes: The reformation of the offender, and the protection of society. Accompanying such a shift in the motives of punishment, efforts have been made to prevent and remedy the conditions, psychological, medical, economic, etc., which give rise to first offences.

Punishment designed to reform and rehabilitate the criminal

and, at the same time, to protect society, involves two conflicting ends only to the extent that the criminal is not successfully reformed. If and when the first motive succeeds, society is obviously protected by that very fact. Only when the criminal is not reformed do the methods aiming at reformation lead to future additional harm to other individuals. The two most important procedures designed to aid in the rehabilitation of a criminal are probation and parole or ticket of leave. In the case of probation, an offender is allowed to remain at liberty under the supervision of a probation officer, instead of being committed to prison. The main advantage of this method is that in relatively mild first offences the stigma of a prison sentence is avoided, and the offender is allowed, under observation, to continue his search for economic and personal security in the world. In the case of parole or ticket of leave, a person who has served a part of a prison sentence is permitted to spend the remainder of his term outside of prison, yet under the supervision of parole officers. This device offers an incentive towards good behaviour while in prison, and thus acts as a valuable aid to reform. In addition, it provides a transitional period between prison days and days of complete freedom. In this way the offender is given a chance to rehabilitate himself while still under the eye of the law, whereas otherwise he is turned loose at the end of his term with no money, no economic opportunities, and no direct constraint upon him to make his conduct conform to legality. Accompanying the use of the probation and parole systems, attempts have been made to use the days of prison life, as far as possible, as a period of schooling. The most important feature of prison education is the requirement of various types of work. Idleness in prison seems merely to accentuate the inability of a released criminal to reorient his ways of living to a legal pattern. Within the prison, whether in a city or in the country, various occupations are devised to prepare the criminal for a later life of active work outside. In his prison work he is given as large a measure of responsibility

as possible. The period of parole is considered merely as an extension of such responsibility beyond the confinement of the prison.

Another measure which has been adopted in some localities to aid in the reformation of the criminal is the indeterminate sentence. An absolute indeterminate sentence is one involving no specific period of time whatsoever. A person is sentenced to imprisonment for whatever length of time, great or small, is necessary to effect his reformation. This system has rarely been put into practice. A restricted indeterminate sentence sets either an upper or a lower limit of years, or both. Between these limits the term of an offender is determined only by the rapidity of his reformation. Thus, if the limits are between three and five years, he must serve at least three years, but he may be paroled as soon afterwards as his conduct justifies. His parole continues until the five-year period is over, after which he is free from supervision whatever the extent of his reformation at that time, unless, of course, he has meanwhile been recommit-
ted for new offences.

Even the most optimistic advocates of these various devices for the reformation of criminals—probation, parole, and the indeterminate sentence—admit that the other major aim, the protection of society, enters in to limit and restrict their use. Certain types of crime warrant at least the permanent imprisonment of the offender. About these cases there is disagreement only concerning capital punishment, which we shall shortly consider. At the other extreme, few people deny the proved efficacy of probation, parole, and the indeterminate sentence in many milder cases. Disagreement concerning the treatment of criminals arises chiefly in regard to offenders who are neither obviously potentially reformable nor unreformable.

Some sociologists envisage the time when parole officers, psychologists, and other specialists will receive complete control over criminals, with full power to set the upper and lower limits of the sentence, to parole or not to parole. Under this sys-

tem, the judge would merely sentence the criminal, but all details connected with the length of the sentence would pass into the hands of the specialists. This procedure has never been adopted in either England or the United States, possibly chiefly because of a fear that a man might be paroled too soon, or that his period of parole might be continued out of all proportion to the gravity of his offence. Even so conservative a student of criminology as Gillin⁹ believes wholeheartedly in the principle of the absolute indeterminate sentence, although he would not take all control from the courts.

What are the merits and demerits of these various systems designed to reform the criminal? No one would deny that the improvement of conditions of prison life is important. There is probably little danger that a prison environment will ever become sufficiently pleasant to be attractive to persons having difficulties in the outside world. Probably the chief limitation to extensive prison reform is the cost to the public. In a world with other challenges, negative and positive, how exclusively should a political group concentrate its attention and economic effort upon the problems of penology? As for the parole system, the most usual defence of it points to the large number of persons whom it aids in the complex process of rehabilitation. A major argument in its favour is the very small percentage of offenders that abuse it, break their parole, or commit fresh crimes. On the assumption that all prison life *per se* fails to reform, obviously every successful reformation effected by the parole system is that much to the good. On the same assumption, those cases in which the parole system fails are cases in which the straight prison sentence would also have failed. Therefore society loses nothing except a period of temporary security during the longer jail sentence. On this assumption, the paroled criminal who commits a fresh offence is one who would in any case have done so sooner or later.

⁹ Gillin, *Criminology and Penology*, Appleton-Century, 1935, pp. 495-519, esp. p. 514.

On the other hand, the parole system is no better than the people who administer it. If those persons—in spite of all specialized knowledge—fail to use discrimination and evaluation in their dealings with prisoners, they will turn loose upon society persons who may quite quickly repeat their criminal conduct, possibly in a different locality or even a different nation. Furthermore, the absolute inefficacy of punishment as a deterrent is far from demonstrated. If the day should come when prison conditions and the world outside were both much more ideal, punishment for reformation only would be the sole, justifiable type. In the interim, however, the chance of criminals using the system of parole for their own selfish ends cannot be denied. While not in any sense justifying an abandonment of the plan, this fact ought to temper any tendency of courts and prison authorities to place the entire problem in the hands of parole officers. The specialist, by his very knowledge of the manifold causal factors which go into the commission of a crime, may overlook cases in which the judge and jury with saner insight recognize deliberate, punishable conduct. The problem of group crime is too complex to be reduced to any one pattern, and punishment must have correspondingly various aims and intensities. In many cases, as subsequent events prove, more is at stake than the reformation of the criminal. If such reformation can be effected, the result is fortunate for everyone; if it fails, there is no certainty that the parole procedure itself was not partly at fault.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

A major ethical question concerning crime is the problem of capital punishment. There is hardly an issue concerning human conduct which has been so hotly debated in recent times among legal theorists, psychologists, criminologists, and religious teachers.

“Thirty years ago in Paris,” Tolstoi tells us, “I once saw how, in the presence of thousands of spectators, they cut a man’s head off

with a guillotine. I knew that the man was a dreadful criminal; I knew all the arguments that have been written in defence of that kind of action, and I knew that it was done deliberately and intentionally; but at the moment the head and body separated and fell into the box I gasped, and realized not with my mind nor with my heart but with my whole being, that all the arguments in defence of capital punishment are wicked nonsense, and that however many people may combine to commit murder—the worst of all crimes—and whatever they may call themselves, murder remains murder, and that this crime had been committed before my eyes. . . .”¹⁰

Tolstoi's view of capital punishment has, however, hardly been one that human societies in general have shared. In the past the death penalty has taken the form of beating, beheading, burning, cutting asunder, crucifixion, drowning, destruction by wild beasts, impaling, etc. Among present-day groups, such methods as hanging, guillotining, electrocution, and asphyxiation in a lethal chamber are used. Moreover, the crimes for which the death penalty have been exacted have ranged from petty thievery and arson to murder, rape, and kidnapping. In recent times, some communities have abolished capital punishment, while many others have limited its application to the severest offences.

All the motives for punishment in general have been brought forward in defence of capital punishment—excluding, of course, the reformation of the criminal. Retaliation, private and governmental, expiation, the deterrence of others, and the protection of society, have, all of them, been advanced as grounds for such punishment. Unlike other types of punishment, however, capital punishment has been attacked by various persons from Saint Augustine to Tolstoi and modern humanitarians on the ground that it violates the very spiritual nature of man, and is unequivocally wrong, apart from any real or alleged benefits flowing from it. No crime is so horrible, no character so unre-

¹⁰ Tolstoi, *What Then Must We Do?* Aylmer Maude's translation, Oxford, 1925, pp. 14-15. By permission of the publishers.

generate, as to justify deliberate, legal killing. Such an argument is put forward sometimes on religious grounds, as in the case of Tolstoi, and at other times simply on the grounds of the complete irresponsibility of all, even the worst, criminals. Modern criminologists have furthered the spread of this doctrine by attacking the theory that a criminal (or anyone else, for that matter) has the power of free choice. By tracing all crime to roots in heredity, and in psychological, physiological, and economic environmental factors, every criminal is shown to be completely the product of forces lying beyond his control and which have made him what he is and not otherwise. Such influences have made his crimes a foregone conclusion. Modern criminal law has met this theory halfway by admitting that many crimes apparently committed by normal persons acting deliberately can be shown to be the product of acute paranoia or other forms of insanity, and hence that in such cases all idea of "intent" or responsibility is out of the question. In general, however, modern criminal law has refused to go the whole way, and continues to hold normal persons responsible for their actions, and to punish them accordingly, sometimes with death. Thus, a plea of insanity, if successfully established, enables a murderer to escape the electric chair, whereas demonstrated normality may lead to his execution.

This situation has a paradoxical result. To the extent that punishment aims, as modern criminologists say it should, at the protection of society, the insane paranoiac murderer would deserve to be electrocuted no less than the sane slayer. The permanent incarceration of the former in an institution for the criminal insane is no absolute guarantee that he eventually may not escape to prey upon society. Because of his pronounced homicidal tendencies, it is a known fact that if he escapes he will immediately commit fresh crimes. The relatively sane murderer is no greater menace to society. In fact, to the extent that the sane man's crime was actually based upon choice, as assumed by the jury in opposition to modern criminological

theory, to that extent he might, if released, choose next time to live in a lawful manner. Therefore, to the extent that protection of society is the sole motive for punishment, the paranoiac murderer is the one who ought to be electrocuted, while the sane murderer should be given another chance—which is precisely contrary to the manner in which the two types are now treated.¹¹

Is the death penalty ever justified? Capital punishment from motives of vengeance and expiation may be dismissed as brutal and degraded. Such motives will continue among us until we are much wiser than we are, but this fact does not make them necessary, prudent, or wise. The use of the death penalty will probably operate in some cases to deter others from crime. It is doubtful, however, whether such deterrence is sufficiently effective or widespread to warrant the retention of the penalty on this ground alone. The major issue is the problem of the welfare and protection of society, as set over against the deliberate, legal taking of one human life. If a person has an inner spiritual life, has any group of his fellows the right deliberately to kill him? The answer of the present author, intended with due humility, is in favour of capital punishment. If we could be certain that permanent imprisonment were possible for incurable criminals; if, in addition, the cost of maintaining them in prison for a lifetime were negligible; if, in brief, there were no other competing values towards which a group of persons ought to direct their strivings, preventive and remedial, save the protection of society from these criminals, nothing would be gained by a legal execution rather than life imprisonment. In fact, however, none of these conditions is ever fulfilled. While there is life there is hope, even for a man whose first major act outside of prison would be another murder, rape, or kidnapping. As in the case of the incurable insane and the criminally insane, the cost of maintaining a murderer in prison

¹¹ Socrates' ironic argument in *Hippias II* that the deliberate evil-doer is better than the involuntary one; cf. above, pp. 204-07.

for his full span of years may be great. Such cost is not merely economic. He requires the care of guards, physicians, and attendants, care that is very much needed by other criminals who are capable of being reformed or other insane persons who are curable. Probably there is a deep spiritual truth in the saying that *tout savoir est tout pardonner*. Perhaps the day will come when the point of view of even the most hopeless criminal will be understood. If and when that day comes, all capital punishment will be considered a relic of more foolish times. Until that day, it remains in some cases a necessary and prudent preventive measure.

FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS AND INSANITY

The presence of a considerable number of feeble-minded persons in a community constitutes a serious group ethical problem. These people fall into three different classes: (1) Morons, having an intelligence quotient of between 50 and 70—*i.e.*, whose mental age remains between eight and eleven; (2) imbeciles, having a quotient between 25 and 50—*i.e.*, whose mental age remains between four and seven; (3) idiots, with an intelligent quotient below 25—*i.e.*, whose mental age never gets beyond that of a three-year-old child. Therefore, feeble-mindedness is relative. The idiots and imbeciles are institutional cases, and present almost entirely a problem of adequate bodily care. On the other hand, some morons are in institutions, and may be able to aid in the care of their less intelligent fellows, while others are cared for by their families, or roam the world. Morons readily become criminals, because they lack the mentality to perceive the significance of their acts, and because they easily become tools in the hands of unscrupulous persons. In general, the mentality of a moron remains that of a young boy who enjoys games involving the use of firearms, the only difference being that the adult moron is more likely to use an actual pistol in his "play."

The root of the larger portion of feeble-mindedness seems to

be heredity. Until studies in prenatal environmental influences have proceeded a great deal further than they yet have, we are forced to class as hereditary those traits which repeat themselves in offspring with no known environmental causal factors operating. Such a conception of heredity leaves the door open to a wide advance in our knowledge of the influences of prenatal environment, and perhaps eventually to a control of any physiological factors which may be found to determine intelligence. Until such knowledge and procedures become available, an hereditary transmission of feeble-mindedness must be assumed. Elaborate studies of certain feeble-minded families—the Jukes, the Kallikaks, etc.—culminate in showing that procreation by feeble-minded persons leads in an extremely large number of cases to the appearance of new generations of equally feeble-minded descendants. Mr. Justice Holmes, in a decision of the United States Supreme Court declaring sterilization legal in the United States, said:

It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind. The principle that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover the cutting of the Fallopian tubes. . . . Three generations of imbeciles are enough.¹²

Obviously, such a law must be exercised with due safeguards. Furthermore, sterilization can never be applied to those transmitters of feeble-mindedness who are normal enough not to be institutional cases. In fact, it is perhaps best to err in the direction of leniency in preventing persons from procreation. On the other hand, in most countries certain strains of hereditary feeble-mindedness are so clearly recognizable that from every point of view the prudent procedure is sterilization. It should be remembered that such a procedure in no way unsexes the person.

¹² *Buck vs. Bell*, 1927, quoted in Ford and Ford, *The Abolition of Poverty*, Macmillan, 1937, p. 68.

Insanity constitutes another important problem in group ethics. With the passing of the demonological and political conceptions,¹³ many communities have established private and public hospitals with every known facility for diagnosing and treating mental abnormalities, as well as for encouraging research. In these institutions incurable and dangerous mental illnesses receive every possible attention, and curable patients are allowed every advantage in the way of medical treatment, environmental and occupational therapy, etc. The cost of such measures is quite high, and in most instances where only limited facilities are available, curable cases, particularly the new ones, receive the first and greatest attention. As in the cases of potential criminals, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Careful attention at school to slightly abnormal mental cases, the betterment of the economic conditions of the community, the alleviation of poverty, more adequate attention to physical health, and wise vocational guidance, can frequently operate to check incipient mental disorders. A relatively recent development in the treatment of mild cases of insanity is the establishment of out-patient clinics in connection with general hospitals. In this way, slightly abnormal persons are encouraged to obtain thorough, early diagnosis of their troubles. They are urged to consider such difficulties as quite on a par with minor physical illnesses, with no stigma attached to them, and with no need for entering an institution. There is still disagreement among physicians as to whether such out-patients should receive continued treatment.

Once a person is sufficiently mentally ill to require commitment to an institution, he is encouraged to enter voluntarily. This procedure is complicated by the necessary attitude of courts in demanding that every citizen receive due constitutional protection. Where entrance into an institution is not voluntary, there is a formal commitment by a judge, and sometimes by a jury. The testimony of physicians is the basis for such commit-

¹³ Cf. above, pp. 279-80.

ment. In cases of persons with homicidal or other dangerous tendencies, commitment must be swift and certain, both to protect the patient and others. Once such persons are committed, intensive care for the first few months is imperative. In this way the chances of a cure are greatest, for the greater the length of confinement the less the chances of eventual cure. In curable cases it is quite important to prevent the patient from becoming too completely settled in the routine of hospital life. Unless this is prevented, the chances of his being able to make a successful readjustment to the outside world are decreased. The same environmental factors which doubtless played a partial rôle in producing his illness—unemployment, poverty, unhealthy surroundings, difficulties in relations to other people, etc.—all these influences are in any event likely to begin to surge upon him again after his release. If, in addition, he is forced to break habits of hospital life that have become too mechanical and routine, his chances of remaining permanently cured are lessened. The relation between the hospital and the patient's friends or relatives is also of great importance, both during and after his period in the hospital. The patient departing from a hospital needs the advice and encouragement both of his physicians and attendants and of his friends outside. He must be prepared for the change, and receive every possible service during convalescence. Lastly, the hospital authorities must keep in touch with the recovered patient, observe his progress or regression, and if possible aid in the elimination of environmental factors which tend to re-create his disorder. For incurable patients, hospitals can only do everything possible to make their permanent life of confinement as pleasant as is compatible with the welfare of other patients, the normal citizens outside, and the taxpayer's purse.

WARFARE BETWEEN NATION-STATES

The high contracting parties solemnly declare in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solu-

tion of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.

The high contracting parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means.¹⁴

If wishes were horses beggars would ride.
 If turnips were watches, I would wear one by my side.
 And if "ifs" and "ands"
 Were pots and pans,
 There'd be no work for tinkers.¹⁵

Unlike group poverty, insanity, crime, etc., warfare between nation-states is not a permanent, unbroken condition. In Greek and Roman times, in the Middle Ages, and in modern centuries, there have been periods of peace—to whatever extent friction between nations continued in such intervals. In opposition to such periods, warfare involves actual armed conflicts, within a state, between two states in olden times, or between two or more nation-states in modern days. If we remember that Aristotle believed a group of 120,000 persons to be too large to be considered a state, we get some idea of the difference between conflicts among Greek city-states and conflicts between modern nation-states, each of which is composed of many millions of inhabitants. Major modern wars are more or less world wars. In spite of all their cruelties—burning, pillaging, murdering of noncombatants, enslavement, etc.—battles prior to the use of gunpowder were to a considerable degree conflicts between individual soldiers. Therefore, among the Greeks and in the Middle Ages, the element of personal bravery and heroism was quite prominent; one warrior jousting with another. With the advent of gunpowder and larger armies, such personal heroism necessarily decreased. The use of cannon, or even the rifle, necessarily made fighting relatively impersonal. Personal

¹⁴ *The Pact of Paris*, 1928, Articles 1 and 2.

¹⁵ *Mother Goose*.

bravery remained, but it was not so easily recognizable in mass actions. This change in no way diminished those unheroic concomitants of warfare, so aptly described by Schiller in his account of the Thirty Years' War. Pillage, sacking of towns, murder, rape, etc., accompanied war wherever it appeared. Hegel believed that the more impersonal sort of warfare brings with it higher wartime ideals. To the extent that impersonal ideals embodied in the nation-state are superior, in his opinion, to merely individual values, precisely to this extent he believed impersonal warfare to be nobler than ancient methods and wartime aims. Indeed, reversing cause and effect in a remarkable fashion, Hegel contends that western man's achievement of the higher impersonal point of view actually *caused* the use of the rifle to set in.

More recently than Hegel's day there have been other developments in warfare in a more impersonal, as well as ruthless, direction. The use of poison gas, the bombardment of civilian populations, the use of economic blockade to starve the civilian populace (sometimes called a measure short of war), bacteriological warfare—such measures, while probably no worse in their effects than ancient plunder, pillage, rape, enslavement, torture, etc.—mark the extension of the effects of war to larger groups of noncombatants and the breaking down of any vestige of difference between heroic action among soldiers, and unheroic acts off the battlefield, yet always accompanying war. These changes, while not destroying incidental individual bravery and heroism, involve the complete merger of the impersonality of war with large-scale ruthlessness.

Alongside of such changes in the methods of warfare, there has arisen a correspondingly widespread revulsion of groups of individuals against war. Probably such aversion has always been periodic in the history of mankind, in so far as the horrors of conflict touched various communities and crossed the doorsteps of individuals and families. In the past, however, these feelings were quickly forgotten. They rarely penetrated the minds of

statesmen, thinkers, or even religious leaders, with the possible exception of earlier Christian groups and certain Oriental peoples. Prevailing political, group ethical, and economic conditions all tended to make warfare a matter to be taken for granted, as the only method for settling serious disagreements between states or nation-states. As the methods of ruthless, impersonal warfare increased in number and kind, sentiment against war sprang up among many of the leaders and thinkers of modern nations. Tolstoi's anarchism represents a nineteenth-century movement, pacifistic in aim, dedicated to the tenet of nonresistance. This practice, seemingly more native to the Orient, has been adopted recently in India under the leadership of Gandhi. In the West, much modern sociological thinking has carried with it a pacifistic tinge. Jane Addams was in 1911 optimistic enough to believe that warfare was passing away as a practice between nations. Also, political leaders in various western countries (many of which had extensive warfare experiences behind them) inaugurated various international conferences, peace plans, and conceptions of international morality, attempting to check the practice of international warfare or at least to humanize it. These attempts culminated in the Kellogg-Briand peace pact in 1928, the core of which was quoted at the beginning of the discussion of this topic. In no other document was the aim of the pacifist more clearly and unmistakably formulated. At the point in western history at which mankind's wartime practices had reached the lowest ebb in cruelty, ruthlessness, and impersonality, their ideal soared to a new peak of pacifism. Certain tenets of the New Testament, the ideas of Lao-tse, Tolstoi, Jane Addams, and a host of other peace-loving persons, had at last been explicitly adopted by every major potential warmaking nation-state. There remained only the need for the discovery of ways and means for putting into practice over a full span of mankind's history this uniquely prudent resolution.

No one should belittle this ideal of peace as stated in the Kellogg pact and widely adopted throughout the world. The

student who aims at ethical wisdom will not identify himself with the band of cynical "realists" who point only to the wide divergence between twentieth-century practice and the theory involved in the pact, as evidence of the meaninglessness of the latter. It is, indeed, an unfortunate feature of all ideals that are too far beyond given operating conditions and motives, that their relative unattainability results almost inevitably in either a brazen, cynical rejection of the ideal in practice, or—perhaps even worse—an hypocritical "adaptation" of the ideal to special contingencies and circumstances which saves it in name, but subverts it in fact. "Undeclared" wars are still wars, and always will be such. Nor does it seem fitting for nations with warlike pasts to indulge too hastily in pointing the first finger. Measures preparing for war are as decided violations of the spirit of the peace pact as is any first overt act which is legalistically labelled war, or aggression. One swallow does not make a summer, and perhaps later generations will some day record the Kellogg-Briand peace pact as the outstanding historical event of our century. Mankind's reach must exceed its grasp—whereby we must remember that the prevention of war is merely a negative goal, merely the elimination of an evil.

As in the case of poverty and crime, many causes of modern war are quite clear. Chief among these is the matrix of economic conditions, subsisting inside nations and between them. Modern industrialized nation-states frequently lack raw materials within their borders. They must import such materials, change them into manufactured goods, and export them, if they are to live. So long as the sources of raw materials are found in colonies or other countries, and so long as there are foreign markets for the manufactured goods, this situation need not lead to war. When, however, several nations compete in the search for sources of raw materials and for foreign markets, friction arises between them which may lead to international conflict.

Furthermore, political factors may bring about war. Nations

find their honour, prestige, imperial aspirations, forms of government, etc., threatened by other national groups. Using certain keywords peculiarly rooted in the political traditions of the country, political leaders, newspapers, the radio, even advertisements and the motion pictures, stir up and keep alive a love of one's own country and a hatred of some other. Art, literature, music, philosophy, and organized religion are used for these ends, following the ancient Platonic formulae. Mr. Niebuhr shows how national altruism is almost a psychological impossibility.¹⁶ Personal egoism may conflict with altruism, in relations between individuals. Let a person's emotions, however, become directed to the relations between his country and another, and all becomes egoism. The statesman who altruistically sacrificed his country to the interests of another would stand condemned by his fellow citizens, however altruistic he was in his personal life. National egoism, whether natural or artificially inculcated and sustained, is the material out of which war emotions spring. Political motives for war may find themselves fortified by economic considerations, yet they may operate with such strength as to override all matters of national economic well-being.

Alongside the more general political and economic factors, there may operate, under certain special conditions, such an element as population pressure. Anyone who had noticed the difference in the density of population in various parts of the world after 1492 might have predicted that the large, relatively empty lands in the western hemisphere would in several centuries become occupied by energetic Europeans. Similarly, the march of the United States across the North American continent to the Pacific coast was probably the inevitable result of the presence of an active, pioneer type of folk upon the edge of a rich, large, sparsely occupied territory. There is no reason to assume that many conflicts between nations do not arise partly because

¹⁶ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, cited by Wheelwright in *A Critical Introduction to Ethics*, Doubleday, Doran, 1935, pp. 351-53.

of such population pressures operating along with economic reasons.

Even more specifically, a major cause of war might be considered to lie in the mere existence of armies, navies, the groups of men who make these professions a career, and the armament manufacturers whose specific economic interests are furthered by the procedures of warfare. Some people find in the makers of arms a sinister type of person who deliberately foment wars. Doubtless, when nations are pacifically inclined, these persons may attempt to block any political measures harmful to their business. On the contrary, when nations are hastily arming (or, as it is sometimes called, rearming) the shoe is on the other foot, and such Machiavellis are deliberately courted by governments and aided to speed up production (including profits). It is exceedingly doubtful whether the mere presence of an army or navy is ever the instigating cause of war; that it is a *sine qua non* of war is universally admitted. Two small boys armed with sticks are doubtless more easily constrained to fight *with sticks* than if they lacked them. Whether, lacking sticks, they would be less constrained *to fight* is quite doubtful. With the economic and political motives for war latent in the breasts of men, all other considerations concern only ways and means.

Tolstoi, a bitter opponent, on spiritual grounds, of all war, mentions another cause of war; namely, boredom with peace, and failure in the art of peaceful living. In his *Anna Karenina* he mentions the fact that the surge of Pan-Slavism which swept Russia during the war between Serbia and Turkey was felt most deeply by those members of society who had little or nothing to do. Instead of continuing to be bored with the endless round of court functions, dinner parties, and the routine of office work, they suddenly had something to work for, the organization of aid for the sufferers, the collection of funds, speeches, rallies, the writing of propaganda, etc. In addition, the volunteers who were collected and sent off to Serbia were, Tolstoi said, either

ne'er-do-wells, riff-raff, soldiers of fortune, or simply outright failures in anything they had attempted in life. This picture is doubtless an oversimplification, yet alongside of other more potent factors, many persons (and even nations) find warfare to involve an element of adventure, an escape from boredom and from a sense of futility. These people and nations are psychologically ripe for any type of activity which involves a challenge. The more difficult, less exciting task of envisaging, searching for, and achieving ideals in personal life, or of turning their potential enthusiasm towards such group remedial activities as prison work, the clearing of slums, the elimination of poverty, etc., is for them impossible. It is much easier to mobilize a nation (including its business and industry) to fight a foreign war than to wage some moral equivalent of war at home.

The call to psychological armament does not come all at once. As Mark Twain says:

The loud little handful—as usual—will shout for the war. The pulpit will—warily and cautiously—object—at first; the great, big, dull bulk of the nation will rub its sleepy eyes and try to make out why there should be a war, and will say, earnestly and indignantly, "It is unjust and dishonourable, and there is no necessity for it."

Then the handful will shout louder. A few fair men on the other side will argue and reason against the war with speech and pen, and at first will have a hearing and be applauded; but it will not last long; those others will shout them, and presently anti-war audiences will thin out and lose popularity. Before long you will see this curious thing: the speakers stoned from the platform, and free speech strangled by hordes of furious men who in their secret hearts are still at one with those stoned speakers—as earlier—but do not dare to say so. And now the whole nation—pulpit and all—will take up the war cry, and shout itself hoarse, and mob any honest man who ventures to open his mouth; and presently such mouths will cease to open.

Next the statesmen will invent cheap lies, putting the blame upon the nation that is attacked, and every man will be glad of those conscience-soothing falsities, and will diligently study them, and refuse to examine any refutations of them; and thus he will by and

by convince himself that the war is just, and will thank God for the better sleep he enjoys after the process of grotesque self-deception.¹⁷

Mark Twain did not have in mind a nation in which there was no free speech to begin with or no unbiassed information about the blamelessness of the nation being attacked. Nor did he live to see the days in which the press and radio and pulpit of countries with free speech are able to mobilize the national hatred for a potential enemy years in advance, by tirelessly portraying that as yet friendly nation as the epitome of everything that is evil and dangerous. He furthermore overlooked the conclusion Lord Ponsonby reached, that the most effective propaganda against another country is by personification, preferably using that country's governmental head and vilifying him as three things, a lunatic, a criminal, and a barbarian.¹⁸ Without more general economic and political factors driving a nation to war, such propaganda will probably be impotent; it represents, however, another contributing cause of international conflicts.

THE CITIZEN AND WAR

Once war is declared, loyalty to country is the sole recognizable motive for conduct by any individual in the national group. In some countries, universal conscription is at once adopted, and every available soldier is called to the colours. In other countries, citizens have an opportunity to volunteer. If the need is great enough, however, this method is at once supplemented by a draft of soldiers, either a partial or a total draft of all available man power. Until conscription comes into operation, a pacifist may simply keep his mouth shut, and continue his work; this is passive pacifism, no expressed approval or disapproval of the war. Active pacifists may call themselves to public attention by anything varying from a chance remark, reported by a chance citizen, and possibly causing such punishment as the loss of a job or imprisonment, to attempts (probably futile) to persuade

¹⁷ Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger; a Romance*, Harper, 1916, pp. 128-29. By permission of the publishers.

¹⁸ Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime*, Dutton, 1929, pp. 71-73.

others to join in passive resistance. Such pacifists are apt to suffer exceedingly for their beliefs. If the national emergency is not too great, Quakers and others may remain unmolested. The Marxian Socialist is committed at least by his creed to the procedure of actively attacking his own government, acts of sabotage, enlisting and turning against his officers, etc. For all citizens, discrimination, evaluation, and choice are allowed only if they lead to the one conclusion, loyalty to the government in the conduct of the war. Any aim in personal or group living which is not consonant with this one group aim is suppressed, perhaps ruthlessly.

No war is ever just on the part of the instigator. No national aim or aspiration can be judged to be a wise goal if its achievement requires modern, ruthless, impersonal warfare as a means. In most cases, however, it is quite difficult to distinguish between the instigating country and its opponent. Military men of various nations have elaborate plans to carry on any possible war in the territory of the enemy. Consequently an actual invasion is not always a safe criterion of which country has started a war. Just as one man may strike another because he sees the latter's arm drawn back in a threatening manner, so one nation may strike first because it sees the other planning to attack. Nor is "righteous" national indignation a sure sign that the other country is in the wrong. Just as there is hardly an angry man who does not believe at the moment that his anger is righteous, so probably no indignant nation ever failed to believe at the time that its own feelings were just. Probably the factors driving nations into war are always too complex to make the purposes of any of them wholly just. Until such factors can be handled by mankind with more discrimination and accurate evaluation, both sides of every war will find themselves in a position of being able, with some justice, to strike or strike back.

However, all wars are not, for this reason, equally prudent. Once a nation is actually invaded or threatened with starvation by blockade, prudent conduct may very well involve enlistment

and the loyal support of all citizens. Such support ought not to be blind and unthinking, but the result of discrimination, evaluation, and choice. For Quakers and other active pacifists, participation even in such wars is absolutely wrong. When they act upon their convictions and suffer the stigma of disloyalty, they may be following the wisest course of all. Yet until such pacifism spreads to a sufficiently large number of their fellow citizens to preserve all of them—even at the price of defeat and perhaps national disintegration—from the horrors which the pacifist personally avoids, such pacifism would seem to be impotent except to save the skins of its individual advocates.

On the other hand, in wars carried on solely in defence of world markets—or, even worse, with active imperialistic aims, there would seem to be a genuine need for active opposition to the government—not a Marxian revolt with its own particular revolutionary aims, but speaking, writing, voting, and persuading. There is one curious fact about the nature of human wars. Except for certain Amazons, and citizens of a few countries, half of humanity has never taken direct, active part in the fighting; namely, women. However enthusiastic in their support of wars, and for whatever reason they may be hindered, women do not face the prospect, in most countries, of enlisting, being drafted, and fighting. The women can stand out in opposition to a war with less of a stigma being placed upon them than can the men. A man who is personally brave is at once confused with a coward if he becomes an active pacifist.

Therefore, while war is a major evil in group life, the extermination of which is one of the wisest goals of all, yet in some wars the active participation of citizens is less justified than in others. In no war will the wise way for an individual citizen involve a blind acquiescence in the conduct of the group, or in the mouthing of the songs and tales and discourses of the moment, but in some wars an individual should show his loyalty by doing knowingly what others are doing blindly or solely at the behest of authority. In other wars, an individual should risk

persecution and suffering in an attempt, however impotent, to persuade others to desist from their madness. Meanwhile, we may hope for the day when the Kellogg-Briand pact will mean what it says.

GENERAL SUMMARY

As in the case of ethical situations in personal life, wisdom in community living consists of the application of the fruits of evaluation to the solution of particular problems. Most societies recognize the essential evil in the various situations which have here been discussed. All enlightened individuals wish to eliminate from their society such evils as poverty, the misuses of industry, sickness, the abuses of legal machinery, crime, capital punishment, and national warfare. Most disagreement arises concerning the ways and means of achieving these uniquely prudent ends. The ethical problem consists in almost every situation, to a large extent, of the reflective examination of proposed solutions. In general, a suggested mode of prevention or remedy for any one of these evils must take into account the total group ethical situation—the character and inner welfare of the individuals in the society, and the framework of political and economic conditions necessary to the external well-being of individuals. The emphasis must be laid upon the total life of community excellence, and not upon the special advantages of any particular clique or circle. Wisdom in group conduct implies the ability to consider the welfare of the whole group,¹⁹ with a special stress upon the more specific problem-situations which we have treated. In a wider sense, community wisdom must also consider other more positive goals, which will now be investigated.

¹⁹ Cf. Plato's *Republic*, Book IV, §428.

CHAPTER XI

TYPES OF POSITIVE SITUATIONS IN GROUP LIFE

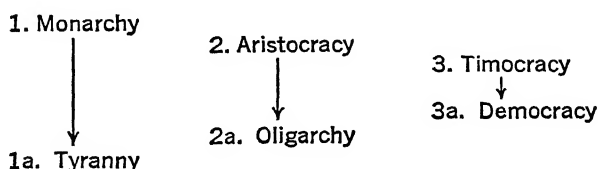
THE NATION-STATE AND GROUP LIFE

A PATIENT afflicted with acute jaundice tends to see a yellow tinge in everything. We have already examined the views of ethics which consider all problems of conduct exclusively as problems of group living. We found that Hegel considered the nation-state to be the sole locus of all ethical values. As one-sided as this conception seems to be, it would be equally narrow to hold that the existence of nation-states has no bearing upon problems of conduct. Distressing though the fact may be to anarchists who would emancipate individuals from all political ties, or to the Marxians who would replace such ties by loyalty to another group, nation-states continue to be the very focus of many problems of group living. The existence of a kind of jaundice which sees *all* human problems as centring in the nation-state ought not to blind us to the fact that political problems form a major sector of the problems of group living. Aristotle was not far from the truth when he held that politics, in the narrower sense of the term, is concerned with the realization, by means of law, of the fruits of ethical thinking. The nation-state is the major instrumentality for such a realization. Debates and discussions concerning politics, save by those who would abolish the nation-state, concern only the nature of that instrument and the ways and means of its most effective use. What, then, is the nation-state, and what are some of the theories of its function in group conduct?

The nation-state is in some way related to each of the following elements: (1) A group of individuals with a common territory, laws, and customs, possibly also with common economic interests, a common language, religion, race, and traditions, ac-

accompanied by an existing psychologic belief or feeling among the group that they are united as one. This group is called the people or the citizenry or sometimes the nation. (2) A special individual or group of individuals, however selected, who in one way or another have the power of making and carrying out the laws. This group is called the government, the sovereign, the officials, or sometimes, in a misleading fashion, the state. (3) The laws or systems of laws enacted by the government, sovereign, or officials; in the final analysis, laws—like customs, traditions, and beliefs—are determined entirely pragmatically by the fact that they in one way or another can be and are made acceptable to the people or citizenry, and become determinants of the latter's conduct; the acceptance of laws is merely more certain than in the case of customs in general, since machinery exists to assure it. (4) The instruments of power—police, army, navy, as well as guns, ammunition, etc.—which the government is able to use to enforce the laws if all other methods fail. A nation-state may be considered to be identical with any one of these four elements, or it may be taken as the matrix of relations between them.

What is the relation between the government and the people? Following Aristotle's formulae, we can distinguish between three major types of government, with a corrupted form of each.



(1) Government by one man for the benefit of the many: Monarchy.

(1a) Government by one man in his own interest: Tyranny.

(2) Government by a few for the benefit of the many: Aristocracy.

(2a) Government by the few in their own interests: Oligarchy.

(3) Government by a large minority of citizens, possibly determined by property qualifications: Timocracy.

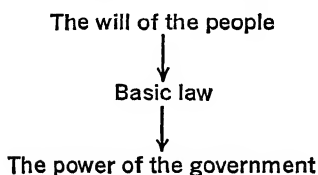
(3a) Government by the many: Democracy.

In Aristotle's opinion, a monarchy is the best government, since it combines the best aim, the welfare of the people, with the most effective means, the discriminating intelligence of one person. He admitted, however, that a corruption of this best type results in the worst type of all, a tyranny, in which the worst end, the selfish interest of the ruler, is sought by the most unhampered and effective means, the intelligence of that ruler. Aristocracy is, in Aristotle's opinion, the second-best type. It combines the best aim, the welfare of the people, with the next to the most effective means, the efficiency of a small group. Its corrupt form, oligarchy, while bad, is not so bad as a tyranny. An oligarchy is able by its compact nature to govern with relative effectiveness in the interest of a small clique. Timocracy is the third-best type. It involves an unwieldy kind of government by so large a minority as the property owners, but its end can still be a good one, the interest of everybody. In practice, however, such a government is frequently indistinguishable from its corrupt form: namely, a democracy, the attempted government by the many. Neither a democracy nor a timocracy is a very bad government. The dispersion of power is too wide to allow permanent, widespread, undetected corruption. The weakness of these types is chiefly due to an incoherence of aims and an ineffectiveness of method. In general, Aristotle meant that if a government by one man is good, it is very good, while if it is bad, it is horrid; if a government by a few is good, it is on the whole quite good; and if bad, on the whole quite bad; while a government by a majority or a large minority is never above the ordinary in goodness, nor very far below it in evil.

To these views of Aristotle, let us add the words of another thinker: "No man is good enough to be trusted with unlimited power. Unless he is a saint—perhaps even if he is a saint—he is sure to abuse it." Even Aristotle admitted that truly good monarchs were few and far between; for most states one-man rule is as apt to be a tyranny as a monarchy. Similarly, an unchecked

rule by a few persons is in many cases likely to become a selfish oligarchy rather than an unselfish aristocracy. In practice, the question almost inevitably arises: Who will watch the small clique of supposed aristocrats, to make sure that they are not oligarchs? Because of the rarity of benevolent government by one man or a few men, and the dangers to the welfare of the many lurking in such forms, some states, Aristotle believed, are willing to pay the price of relative incompetence and inefficiency, implicit in government by the many, in order to assure escape from the possibility of despotism.

Aristotle's suspicion that the many cannot rule effectively would have been even stronger, probably, if he could have witnessed the rise of modern nation-states with their millions rather than thousands of inhabitants. The task of ruling in the interest of such a group is incomparably more difficult than were the political problems in a Greek city-state. The very fashion, however, in which modern thinkers have altered Aristotle's formulae is a tribute to their essential soundness. Granting that the aim of wise government is the welfare of the many; admitting also that the most efficient means to that end, as well as the greatest potential threat to that end, lies in a relative concentration of power in the hands of one man or of a few, which governmental processes and forms are best designed both to safeguard the desired end, and to secure the most efficient means? Modern political theory has evolved three instruments or processes of government to accomplish these purposes: (1) Representative government; (2) principles of basic law limiting the specific powers of the government of the moment; (3) machinery for the expression of the will of the governed people, from which even the principles of basic law are considered to



flow. These three layers of political procedure, however cumbersome they may be in some instances, and however various in detail in different states, are designed, all of them, to assure government in the interest of the many, with the actual processes of governing in the hands of a few. Since these two conditions are precisely the ones considered by Aristotle to underlie the best types of government, his basic political ideas may be reaffirmed, without reference to the labels which he attached to such better types of government.

A representative government, to the extent that the electorate is not alert, does not offer the theoretical assurance of wise governing that Aristotle's monarchy holds forth. In practice, however, it holds forth an even greater assurance, for it combines the effectiveness of a small governing group (in Aristotle's terms, aristocracy or monarchy) with a process of supervision of that government by those in whose interest it ought to govern; namely, the people. The representative feature of the government offers a safeguard against the appearance of a tyranny, while the relatively small number of persons actually in the government diminishes the likelihood of the presence of the defects, cumbersomeness, inefficiency, lack of aims, etc., in straight democracies. Ideally, representative government would be a government of the people (that is, a people's government), for the people (that is, in the interest of the people), but not by the people, except, possibly, in the sense that a large number of citizens can be considered by a fiction to act through their representatives. Such a government would combine the advantages of an Aristotelian monarchy or aristocracy with the assurance that the people would have some eventual check upon its activities. It would presuppose that the people were intelligent enough to decide who is able to act in their interests, although not intelligent enough, literally, to govern themselves.

In addition to representative government, some modern nation-states have adopted the theory that certain laws and legal principles are more basic than the powers of the government.

Such laws may centre in a written constitution clarified and interpreted by courts, as in the United States, or they may lie exclusively in the relatively permanent body of past legal enactments by the legislature, similarly clarified and interpreted by courts, as in Great Britain. In both cases, however, certain principles are considered to be so fundamental that no government of the moment can violate them. Such principles are usually called the political constitution, and they are generally designed to assure the most effective operation of government in the interest of the people. The whole body of civil and criminal laws are worked out within the framework of such a constitution. One means sometimes adopted to assure the subordination of the government of men to one of laws is the principle of separation of governmental powers. John Locke believed that, for two reasons, the power to make laws or legislate and the power to execute or carry out those laws ought to be in different hands. First, the need for legislation arises only intermittently, while the need for execution is always present. Secondly, "it may be too great temptation to human frailty, apt to grasp at power, for the same persons who have the power of making laws to have also in their hands the power to execute them. . . ." ¹ Since the legislative power must be concerned more directly with the wise end of all government—namely, the welfare of the citizens—this branch ought to be composed of a group of men elected by, and directly answerable to, the whole citizenry. On the other hand, since the executive power must be concerned less with the end of government than with the effective means of achieving that end, it ought to be composed, in Locke's opinion, of one man. Thus, we see how Locke's theory of a separation of the legislative and executive powers led him to advocate a combination of the two forms of government which Aristotle called monarchy and democracy respectively, with an attempt to retain the advantages of each. Montesquieu carried the principle of separated powers even further by advocating a three-

¹ John Locke, *Of Civil Government*, II, §143.

fold division of government into legislative, executive, and judicial branches, the latter two of which Locke had left joined.

In some nation-states, the will of the people is considered to be more basic than either the powers of government or the constitutional principles underlying those powers. To some extent this idea of the priority of the nation's will is the mere acceptance of a universal fact, and to some extent it is the explicit incorporation of this fact in the principles of government. That the will of the people is, in fact, basic is admitted even by such staunch defenders of the absolute power of the state as Hobbes and Hegel. Each of these men admits that in practice successful revolutions have occurred, demonstrating the *de facto* right of the people to overthrow any government. Hobbes denies, however, any legal right of the people to revolt, and bases his contention upon the absolute renunciation of power by the people in favour of the sovereign, upon entering political society. Hegel believes that a successful revolution never merely reflects the will of the people, but that it is always a more acute phase of the organic evolution of nation-states and state processes. Locke, on the other hand, merely accepts the right of revolution. The people, in his opinion, have a sacred duty to overthrow any government which seeks to make its power absolute and despotic. In the United States, Mr. Justice Wilson in the eighteenth century declared that the right of revolution "should be taught as a principle of the constitution of the United States and of every state in the Union."²

The belief in the right of the people to overthrow a despotic government is but a sharp expression of the view that all constitutional and governmental authorities "derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." Governments are under law, and law is under the will of the people. Revolution is only the last recourse of a nation no longer able to express its will through law. But Locke admitted that people would suffer a

² James Wilson, *Works*, I, 18, quoted by Pound, *Law and Morals*, North Carolina, 1926, p. 89.

great deal before they resorted to force. In fact, in many states, the will of the people can gain orderly expression by such means as impeachment, referendum, recall, the overthrow of the government by elections, and by changes in the basic constitutional law. All such procedures are safety valves designed to accomplish in an orderly and deliberate fashion ends which otherwise would require revolt. The first ten amendments to the American Constitution, which are commonly called the Bill of Rights, represent an example of a modification of basic law designed to assure government in the interest of the governed, and the protection of certain fundamental rights of the citizens:

I. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

II. A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. [Here, in spite of the motive given, the right of revolution is also implied.]

III. No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

IV. The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated. . . .

V. No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury . . . nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

VI. In criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy [certain procedural rights].

VII. In suits of common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved. . . .

VIII. Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

IX. The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

X. The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

Eighteenth-century thinkers believed optimistically that such rights were "natural," and that any abridgment of them by a tyrant was "unnatural." As a result of the spread of the study of history, in the nineteenth century, most political theorists have come to agree that the conception of government implied in the Bill of Rights or in the English Magna Charta must in practice take its chances along with other more absolute theories. The collapse of the theory of "natural rights," like the collapse of any absolute theory of conduct, brings with it a challenge. No longer able to rely upon sanctions, natural or divine, the Bill of Rights must now establish itself as the wise way by more plodding, empirical means. The rights and advantages enjoyed under such principles are no longer considered as indubitably given, but rather as a set of goals which a citizenry must actively strive to win, and to preserve, once attained. Religious freedom, freedom of the press and of speech, security of the citizen's person, house, papers, and effects, a fair trial before a jury, etc., are no longer thought to be "natural" rights of man, antecedently given, and made secure by their mere registry upon paper, but positive goals in group living, in no sense universally achieved by nation-states, or even spontaneously and naturally regarded as valuable. Such rights have, indeed, been established in some countries by the knowledge, discrimination, evaluation, and active striving of prior generations of citizens. Like all goals, however, which are beyond mere basic animal

needs, such rights are preserved only by being actively rewon, by being made the object of new knowledge, discrimination, and search. In fact, at the very moment of the adoption of the Bill of Rights in the United States, its advocates feared that the framers of the main body of the American Constitution, in their disgust at the impotence of the prior existing basic law, and in their strong desire for efficient government, had threatened these very basic rights by omitting them from the Constitution.

In nation-states, the search for wise government must involve a constant shift back and forth between the two considerations which Aristotle brought to the fore: The aim for a government in the interest of the many, yet in the hands of the effective few. When the first of these aims is neglected, the chances increase that political power, however efficient and capable of operating in the interest of all, will shift its purposes to selfish ones and become tyrannical. When the second aim is overlooked, the welfare of the many, however clearly formulated and apparently safeguarded, is in practice sacrificed on the altar of partisan wrangling and bungling. Only by preserving at once the aim of the welfare of the many, and the power of the few as an efficient means to that end, only in this way can wise political living result. At best, such government is an ideal. In most nation-states the pendulum swings back and forth between an unchecked exercise of power by the governing few and an excessive restraint upon them by the governed many. In the first case, possibly the interests of the many are forwarded to a remarkable degree by the uncontrolled powers of the government, yet the exercise of such powers is capable of becoming tyrannical even in the process of achieving so altruistic an aim. In the second case, the clashing of factions and the general incoherence of the aims of the people tend to paralyze all governmental activities. In the swing in the direction of tyranny, even features of the Bill of Rights may be violated; in the swing towards anarchy, the rights of individuals receive a theoretical extension beyond anything that is possible in modern

political society. The two tendencies, if uncorrected, will lead, respectively, to permanent tyranny or anarchy. When they operate together and mutually check each other, the result can and ought to be constitutional government, liberty under law.

ETHICS AND THE NATION-STATE

There is no *a priori* reason why nation-states are necessary to group welfare, or why they should not be replaced by a kind of Tolstoian social anarchy or Marxian working-class dictatorship. Furthermore, there is no indubitable assurance that any nation-state may not take the path to irremediable tyranny. In spite of these facts, no one of the three suggested modes of political life would seem to stand up under dispassionate evaluation. While, quite conceivably, anarchy, tyranny, or Marxism may, any one of them, appear prudent in the face of particular, intolerable political conditions, and while, furthermore, any one of them—however obviously imprudent and foolish—may quite possibly be adopted by particular groups of persons, neither of these considerations would demonstrate the wisdom of the adoption of tyranny, anarchy, or working-class dictatorship.

However theoretically unanswerable may be the Marxist's criticisms of modern nation-states, these political units represent the only demonstrated political machinery for solving many of the problems of group living. Merely to build up a case for wrecking such machinery gives us no clue to what would be designed to take its place.

The anarchist, with equal blindness, tells us to solve the problems of political living by ignoring their existence. Precisely what would be the outcome of a widespread abandonment of all government, law courts, etc., he hardly envisages. The anarchist is only certain that such an abandonment by isolated individuals in isolated cases seems laudable. What the universalizing of such practices would lead to, he does not consider.

Finally, the defenders of tyranny always pose as advocates of benevolent paternalism. The withdrawal of civil rights is

hardly ever accompanied by a glorification of suppression, but is always done in the name of the welfare of all. The tyrant shows his true face when he fears to give the people any genuine say as to what *they* consider their welfare to be. Such defenders of the absolute state as Hegel, Bosanquet, and Norman Wilde never proclaim the subordination of the individual to "external" power, but always to his "truer" self, which the authorities are able to understand and express more adequately than the citizen himself.

Each of these extreme conceptions of political life thrives upon the existence of the others. Threatening tyranny is taken as justification for anarchy or Marxism; indeed, the defenders of these two panaceas confuse all government with tyranny. The threat of Marxism or anarchy is a splendid justification for the erection of absolute state power. The nation is saved from the spectre of Marxism or excessive individualism, and I, the tyrant, am best able to judge the extent of these dangers. All civil rights are considered by the tyrant to be a breeding ground for these two sinister ideologies. Finally, the anarchist finds an equal tyranny in absolute state rule, in Marxism, threatening or actual, and in constitutional government. Each of the three extreme systems unites with the others in being completely blind to any differences between the other two, and their mutual antagonist, representative government. This common myopia is evidence that all three views fail to submit their tenets to the process of long-range discrimination and evaluation.

While it must be admitted that nation-states, fearful of one or two of these extremes, will on occasion joyfully, or in blood and tears, adopt the third, nevertheless, the wise community will strive for those goals which constitutional government envisages and at least makes possible. Such goals, while always the outcome of political activity, fall into two main classes: Exclusively political goals, and those which refer mainly to economic conditions. The American Bill of Rights gives us a clue to both sets. In the first group fall the right of religious freedom, freedom

of speech, of the press, and of assembly, rights relating, in general, to Jefferson's triad—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These rights are not primarily negative; they represent goals over and beyond conditions of physical and economic well-being. Their curtailment ought to require explanation and justification in the eyes of the citizens, never their existence. The citizen of a wisely organized state ought never to be in the position of being forced to prevent and remedy the opposites of these conditions. They should be considered the bases upon which his own life of well-being and well-doing over a full span of years may erect itself. His private happiness, his family life, his career, education, etc., are not constituted by these rights, but without such rights they suffer an incalculable impoverishment. His own pursuit of happiness must take these rights into consideration, and must involve active steps to strengthen them. They flourish only when cultivated; they die of neglect. Such rights carry over and include the right to habeas corpus, trial by jury, and the like.

THE GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL WEALTH

The second set of aims which constitutional government envisages are more closely tied up with economic advantages. Property, external goods, and possessions, are doubtless not so intrinsic to a happy life, a life of well-being and well-doing, as the type of inward excellence requiring such political rights as freedom of speech, religious freedom, etc. Yet the happy man, Aristotle tells us, will require a certain measure of external goods. The whole problem of distributive justice within a nation-state hinges upon the determination of what constitutes the sufficient equipment of external goods which Aristotle considered a requisite for happiness. On this matter, Aristotle himself is hardly able to aid us, since he assumed without question that slaves and persons without a private income were not to be considered. Modern political groups have set for themselves the infinitely more difficult task of attempting to assure a due measure of

external wealth to as many persons as possible, with no groups of citizens arbitrarily excluded. In practice, however, inequalities of wealth and property holdings are, if anything, greater in modern days than in Aristotle's time, at least in the upper amounts.

How can a nation-state achieve the greatest prosperity for the greatest number? At the one extreme, the advocates of complete laissez-faire economy hold that only by freeing business enterprise from all hampering tariffs, taxes, and governmental control, can the incentive to invest and expand be generated to a sufficient degree to increase the income of the group and hence its wealth. Therefore the prosperity of a nation or a community must await the operation of the unseen hand of economic law. At the other extreme, Marxists suggest that the entire system of private, business and industrial enterprise can never yield the kind of economic prosperity which will trickle down to the unemployed and the poverty-stricken. Neither the unseen hand of economic law nor the wisest governmental control of private business and industry can increase the total income and wealth of a nation far enough or spread it widely enough to eliminate poverty and bring about economic security for all. For this reason the revolutionary Marxists contend that the whole system of private enterprise must be overthrown by a revolution of workers, not striking merely in any one city or locality but throughout a nation, and ultimately throughout all major industrial nations. On the other hand, the evolutionary Marxists hold that the same end can and ought to be achieved through peaceful processes of increased governmental control, eventually to be supplanted in a legal fashion by control by the working people.

Between these two extreme views there are various theories which advocate a mixture of unrestricted private enterprise, on the one hand, and governmental control, supervision, or direct ownership, on the other. Economic individualists, admitting the desirability of governmental supervision of some enterprises, oppose governmental ownership of natural resources and basic

industries. Most enterprises, they contend, ought to remain in private hands, although perhaps some of these should be regulated by the government. The State Capitalists, however, assert that governmental ownership of all natural resources and basic industries is desirable.

There is a similar disagreement concerning the use of the governmental power of taxation. Economic individualists hold that taxes should be levied in one way or another solely for the purpose of carrying on the minimum essentials of government. By keeping taxes low, business enterprise is encouraged, the group prospers, and poverty diminishes. State Capitalists hold, however, that taxation should have as one of its major purposes a sharp redistribution of wealth. Many nations and localities agree that the principle of a graduated income tax achieves both of these ends if prudently worked out. By means of low rates and certain exemptions for smaller incomes, yet not too high rates for wealthy people, a certain amount of wealth is redistributed, and yet private business and industrial enterprise are not discouraged from expanding and perhaps bringing greater wealth to everybody. Luxury taxes would help to achieve this end if poorer people could be persuaded in every case to buy essentials first and luxuries later, if at all. A sales tax, unless excluding food, clothing, and medicine, falls equally upon rich and poor. Taxes upon houses and land, if not passed on to poor people renting their homes, also have a tendency to redistribute the wealth. Henry George advocated a single tax upon land whether improved or not. He believed that in this way owners would be encouraged to improve their property, and the resulting surge of economic activity would lead to prosperity. This method has never been found to work sufficiently well to justify much confidence in it.

There is no *a priori* reason why the government may not interfere without limit in the professional, business, and industrial activities of citizens. The portion of the Bill of Rights which concerns the protection of the property of individuals

must take its chance, as we have said before, along with other theories of governmental power. Unlike other civil rights, the right to possess property, to build a business, etc., has always been considered to be limited by the right of the government to tax. In modern industrial society, the theory of extreme *laissez-faire* has been abandoned in favour of governmental regulation, if not ownership, of many types of economic enterprise such as banks, stock exchanges, railroads, public utilities, mining, etc. Furthermore, governments have undertaken large programmes of public-works projects.³ These projects have included financing railroads, building schools, aiding state universities, building highways, etc. All such governmental activities have the eventual effect of redistributing wealth from taxpayers to the whole community. There is no reason why such increased governmental control is not, within limits, necessary and wise. However, just as an untrammelled system of *laissez-faire* can result in great economic hardships to large groups of citizens, so governmental interference with business and industry, as well as governmental spending for public works, can, if carried too far, destroy private initiative and enterprise to such a degree that business, industry, and the entire economic machinery come to a standstill. State Socialists have this avowed aim, intending then to substitute complete governmental ownership and control for what they believe will have been demonstrated to be an outworn system.

On the contrary, the middle path would seem to be the wise one. Particular conditions and circumstances warrant laying the stress at one time upon individual enterprise and at another upon governmental control. In achieving a mean or middle path in practice, Aristotle advocated steering farther from the extreme to which we are already dangerously close. Thus, in cases in which private control has broken down or operates too immediately against the interest of the greatest number of persons,

³ As early as 1834 the government of Virginia aided railroads, canals, and highway construction.

correspondingly strong governmental interference is necessary and prudent; while in cases in which the greatest number of persons are hurt rather by business stagnation following excessive governmental interference, the stress should be thrown back upon the freedom of business and industry from such restraint.

Governmental control of many economic activities has appeared in most nation-states, and seems destined to remain. The greatest national prosperity, as well as the most equitable distribution of goods that is practicable, is as little possible under a type of governmental control that dries up the springs of private business and industry, as under no governmental control of anything. In the latter case, inequalities of wealth appear which can and must be moderated; but in the former case the very interference of the government operates not to create but to destroy the necessary basis of all national wealth, the system of private enterprise. This system must be regulated and restricted to such an extent that its benefits become available for the greatest possible number of citizens, but it must be allowed sufficient independence to guarantee its continuance under its own steam. Without the former, there is the chaos of excessive inequalities of wealth; without the latter, however, there is no assurance that anyone would retain any wealth at all. Only if some such middle way proves impossible will the advocates of tyranny, Marxism, or anarchy gain a hearing. The processes of constitutional government must be made sufficiently flexible to provide the political framework for that middle way.

MODERN INDUSTRY: MEN AND TOOLS

In whatever other, and more basic, ways men differ from animals, there is one difference which is a major source of human mastery of material objects—the large, flexible, human hand. Anaxagoras and Aristotle noted the importance of the human hand, and modern psychologists have stressed its various functions in human living. Primitive man, using only two limbs for standing and walking, discovered that he had two

other limbs free for other uses. The human hand attached to these limbs is a unique instrument: (1) It can contract and become a stick for acts of power; (2) it can relax for subtle acts of tactual discrimination; (3) the human thumb is set opposite the other four fingers, with the result that human beings can grasp objects; (4) the radius bone in the lower part of the arm is so constructed that the hand may be whirled. Therefore merely the possession of the hand itself means the availability of a rather unusual tool. Even more important, however, the power of the hand to grasp is the basis for the use of various other material objects as tools, and eventually the basis of man's long history of activities with stone, copper, iron, and other metals, and fire. If Prometheus called down fire from the heavens and turned it to the use of man, one of the sources of his power was that very humble earthly tool, the human hand.

The use of tools has had a twofold effect upon the course of human development. These effects may be stated in two very general formulae:

- (1) Individual A plus tool x is stronger than individual B
- (2) Individual A minus tool x is weaker than individual B

To illustrate the first principle, let us fancy a tribe of primitive men living at the very dawn of the use of tools. Let us assume that large individual B is the strongest man in the tribe. His physical strength enables him to lead in the hunt and in battle, and to dominate his fellow tribesmen. Little individual A, let us assume, is weaker than the average. He is forced to do menial duties, is left at home during the hunts, and in general is caused to cower and brood. Let us fancy that one day, while the rest of the tribesmen are hunting, little A is sitting in the woods bewailing his lot when he finds himself fingering a large stick. He grasps it, swings it, and breaks a large piece of shale. He strikes other objects and breaks them. He seeks a larger stick, and wields it even more effectively. On the assump-

tion that the use of clubs is unknown to the tribe, chieftain B will return to discover that weak, little A is threatening his authority. Individual A in possession of his tool, the stick, is stronger than individual B without it. Obviously, if A loses his stick, he reverts to the weaker status.

This example, admittedly merely fancied and over-simplified, illustrates, however, the two basic effects of the use of tools upon human development. The possession and continual use of a tool at once strengthens and weakens the user. Those men who become dependent upon the use of sticks, clubs, and weapons, are no longer forced to develop the degree of strength in their arms and bodies which was formerly necessary for survival. Hence, without the tools they are weaker than other men who rely solely upon their own strength; while with the tools they are immeasurably stronger.

Shifting our attention to the modern scene, we find the same two principles operating. A wealthy man in a large city in a modern industrial country takes his seat at his breakfast table. He is wearing a suit which has been made from cloth woven in Lancashire, England. His tie is made of silk from Japan. His breakfast table is made of mahogany from Brazil, and his coffee comes from the same country. His silverware comes from Sheffield; his oranges from California; his cereal from the plains of Nebraska; his marmalade from Spain; his sugar from Cuba; his eggs, butter, and milk, from a large dairy in Virginia. His dining room is lighted by what was, shortly before, the mechanical "push" of the water of the Potomac River. Finishing his meal, he lights his Egyptian cigarette, and reads in his newspaper (which was delivered before breakfast) of events happening that day in every part of a tumultuous globe. Considering all of these advantages as tools which he has at his disposal, as long as he possesses them he is much stronger, and much more able to live successfully in his complex world, than either of our hypothetical savages would be.

But the contrary principle has not ceased to operate. If our

same prosperous civilized gentleman were dropped into a circle of his primitive forebears he would find himself correspondingly helpless. They could hunt, he could not; they could defend themselves with muscles and spears, he could not; they could cook, he could not; they could live out of doors, he could not. They could live without medicine, clothes, central heating, highly seasoned foods, books, newspapers, electricity, etc. He, on the other hand, in the very process of acquiring all of the advantages of that most gigantic and complex of all modern tools—modern industry—has become so dependent upon its services that without them he could not survive.

The history of the transformation of man from a savage into a beneficiary of modern civilization is the history of this simultaneous increase in his strength and his weakness. At almost every stage these changes are marked by the co-operation of hand and mind in the discovery or invention of tools. Passing from the use of fire, stone, metals, on through progress in agriculture, commerce, the rise of cities, the discovery of gunpowder, the printing press, the use of steam, electricity, to the rise of modern industry, we find at every stage the human hand at the service of thoughts and ideas, increasing both the power of man through his tools, and his subservience to those tools and their uses. Modern industrial life is simply the latest link in a chain that is as long as human history itself. For good or for evil, modern industrial civilization is one of the major determinants of the conduct of modern individuals. The problem of the student of ethics is an evaluation of that determinant.

There are several major attitudes which have been adopted towards modern industrial life. In the first place, most people have required no philosopher or social theorist to point out the manifold benefits to individuals which modern mechanical devices yield. The modern gentleman, sitting at his breakfast table, would be merely surprised and annoyed if his Spanish marmalade did not appear at the appointed time, or if the

electric current should fail to light the room. His use of the material advantages of modern industry has become habitual. Most people are as little aware of the benefits of modern industrial life as they are of the very air they breathe. Therefore, the most widespread attitude adopted towards the products of the many complex human tools is an unqualified acceptance of them as necessary, desirable, and good. If modern gunpowder can be used to destroy human lives, modern antiseptics may be used to heal wounds. If modern electricity throws manual workers out of a job, this situation is simply a temporary evil which man's continued triumph over nature will eventually alleviate. This attitude received its theoretical justification in Adam Smith's doctrine of the unseen hand operating to assure to a community the maximum possible wealth—provided only that the government kept its hands off. The same conception continues to subsist in the widespread belief that business prosperity is an unending spiral upwards—with temporary deflections, to be sure, but always in the direction of greater wealth.

Admiration for modern industry is often accompanied by the belief that its benefits overshadow everything else which the otherwise rather petty little species *homo sapiens* has been able to achieve for itself. This conviction means nothing more or less than the worship of the machine, or, as Mr. R. H. Tawney says,⁴ the elevation of industry to a position of singular pre-eminence among human interests. This position has no single leading advocate, as have certain other ethical theories, yet it is so prevalent in the habits and thoughts of men today as to require none. Merely to point to the electric light, the motorcar, modern methods of farming, weaving, housing, and the like, is sufficient to convince most people that here indeed are indubitable values and achievements, while wrangling concerning the values of government, religion, art, etc., can be left to those who are blind to what is really important. Producers of everything from motorcars to toothbrushes

⁴ Cf. below, p. 389.

do not need to speak of egoistic gain or of altruistic service—the products speak for themselves and are sought, used, and valued. Modern consumers may need to be taught to want some things; yet for most of the products of modern industry they already have a developed desire which they spend the greater part of their waking life seeking to satisfy. Their motive in the search for material objects is not chiefly preventive and remedial. They find themselves in a world created to a large extent by man's past triumphs over nature by means of tools, and quite inevitably a major desire in their lives is to participate in the many advantages which those triumphs have brought with them. Many people worship the machine simply because its shrines are largest, and its benefits most obvious. Some men, they know, enjoy the use of motorcars, electric refrigerators, expensive clothes, and special foods; the advantages of such things are clear; and, hence, the search for material objects proceeds apace. The producers merely aim to supply these wants. For all concerned, the benefits of our modern mechanical age are considered to be an end of unquestioned, if not supreme, value.

This tendency to value unduly the products of our modern machine civilization is inevitable in the twentieth century. Never before has the average man found himself in a world in which such a variety of material things is available for persons who have the money to spend. The newly or not so newly rich man is at times garish enough in his taste, but never before has there been such a panorama of purchasable objects available to him. We must remember that mankind is not so very far removed from our hypothetical savage astonished with the newly-won power of his stick. We are too close to the period of the invention of the motorcar, the railroad, the cinema, the radio, etc., to expect anything more than a wide-eyed wonder on the part of most modern adults. This modern world, which is the delight of so many people, as well as a source of nausea

to some few sensitive spirits, is with us whether we like it or not. It is not surprising that the worship of the machine is in full swing.

The second attitude towards modern industrial life is that of the believers in the unique importance of the inward life of spirituality, those who hold that all external, bodily concerns are completely trivial and unimportant. These people unhesitatingly condemn our modern industrial civilization as bad from beginning to end. Tolstoi is a typical representative of this position.

All that formerly appeared to me good and lofty—honours, fame, education, riches, the complexity and refinement of life and of its surroundings, food, dress, and outward manners—all this has become for me bad and mean; while peasant life, obscurity, poverty, roughness, simplicity of surroundings, food, dress, and manners, has all become for me good and noble.⁵

Tolstoi was particularly bitter towards the city life of wealthy persons. Their way of living violates the first condition of spiritual development—"man's union with nature, [life] under the open sky, in the light of the sun and in the fresh air, in contact with the earth, with vegetation, and with animals."⁶ The more wealth people have, the more they cut themselves off from natural surroundings.

Many of them, almost all the women, live on to old age seeing the rising of the sun only once or twice in their lives, and never seeing the fields and the woods except from a carriage or a railway train. . . . These people only see textiles, stone, and wood shaped by human toil, and that not by the light of the sun, but by artificial light. They only hear the sounds of machines, vehicles, cannons, and musical instruments; they smell scents and tobacco-smoke. . . . For the most part, on account of their weak digestions, they eat food that smells and is not fresh. . . . As prisoners console themselves with

⁵ Tolstoi, *What I Believe*, Aylmer Maude's translation, Oxford, 1932, p. 373.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 306-07. Both by permission of the publishers.

a tuft of grass that grows in the prison yard, with a spider or a mouse, so these people sometimes console themselves with puny indoor plants, a parrot, or a monkey, and even these they do not themselves rear.⁷

It is the idleness of such lives, as well as their separation from nature, that is particularly harmful, in Tolstoi's opinion. Even art, novels, verses, music, theatres, and balls fall under his indictment.

In his earlier days, Tolstoi had believed that the chief harm in modern industrial life lay in the poverty, disease, slum conditions, etc., which it brought in its wake. Taking the point of view of a group meliorist, he had undertaken philanthropy and social-service work. He was amazed, he tells us, to discover that there was more real, spiritual living among dwellers in the material sordidness and squalor of the slums than in the salons and mansions of the rich. As horrible as the material conditions were among the city poor, in comparison with the peasant's healthy life of active work under the sun, there was present among the poorest slum dwellers some appreciation of the meaning of living, some sense of spiritual values. Tolstoi came to the conclusion that all philanthropy and social service work was being carried on by well-to-do persons whose souls were in far greater impoverishment than the bodies of the poor. The wealthy were being harmed by the ways of our modern industrial world far more than persons in material want.

Because of these convictions, Tolstoi advocated the abandonment of modern machines and the type of life which they foster and make possible. There should be a return, he held, to the older type of peasant labour in farming. An exodus from cities into the country is desirable. Above all, the political and social accompaniments of modern industry should be eliminated. Law courts, certain types of organized religion, armies, sophisticated art, literature (including his own earlier novels), music, all

⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 307-08.

luxury and finery, and all the economic bases of idleness—all these things are evil. The physical power over nature which modern western civilization brings with it ought to be given up in its entirety as incompatible with true, inward, spiritual values and a life of healthy, hard work in the country.

MODERN INDUSTRY AND WISDOM IN CONDUCT

Unbounded admiration and unmixed antipathy for the products of modern industry are, both of them, foolish attitudes. Both inward excellence and a certain amount of external goods are required for the kind of life which Aristotle called a happy one. The modern worship of machines and their products marks the tendency of many people in modern society to forget that a full life of well-being and well-doing does not chiefly consist of being furnished with external goods. By confusing means and ends, such people elevate an essential accident of a happy life to the position of main or intrinsic importance. The search for even merely a moderate amount of wealth ought never to be an end in itself, but merely a means to the type of living which the morally excellent man desires to make habitual over a full period of years. Aristotle would have been the last to condemn any and all use of modern industrial products and services. Indeed, he mentioned the possibility that machines might perform much labour which in his time was left to slaves. He explicitly held that a person who would have his time and energy freed for the pursuit of knowledge and art must have a certain amount of labour at his disposal. But in his opinion a life which sacrificed all other concerns to acquiring such tools of well-living as money, property, etc., was petty and utilitarian. Without inward excellence, all such advantages count for naught in the search for the full life which he calls happiness. The same considerations would hold for cities and groups of persons.

At the other extreme, however, a rejection of all of the products of modern industry as incompatible with a life of

high spirituality would be equally inharmonious with Aristotle's conception of a happy life. The happy man is primarily a virtuous man—that is, a man who exercises his faculties in accordance with inward principles of excellence over a full term of years. Such virtue is not, however, a passive condition unrelated to other persons, external objects, and political problems. The happy man need not be unduly wealthy, but he must be furnished with a due amount of external goods. At no other particular point does the adequacy of Aristotle's general contentions make itself clearer than in relation to this particular question of the need of external goods. In his opinion, a happy life was necessarily restricted to the few, because in any society which he could visualize the well-being and leisure of even a few citizens required that a bulk of the labour be performed by the many. The one condition which would allow his conception to become applied along more democratic lines was only remotely envisaged by him.

With the rise of modern industry, that one condition has come about. Mass production, labour by machines rather than men, the revolutionary changes wrought in the production and distribution of the necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter—all these changes which are at once the glory of modern industry in the eyes of its devotees and its horror in the eyes of its critics, make possible the freeing of human energies for other activities and leisure on a scale beyond Aristotle's wildest fancy. As a result of these changes, large numbers of people have a very legitimate right to consider a due supply of external goods as quite within their power. Far from modern industry closing the door to a life of virtuous activity, for many people it can and should make possible, for the first time, the external basis of such a life. To abandon the whole industrial system and return to the life of a peasant would today for most people be simply to desist altogether from the search for wise living. A peasant is no farther from the soil and the sun because his home is lighted by electricity at night. The fact that some peasant

women give birth to strapping babies without modern medical assistance is no evidence that others do not lose their babies or die in childbirth themselves for the very lack of such aid. Cleanliness is no assurance of godliness, but neither are dirt and fleas. The worship of modern mechanical conveniences is a fetish, but a renunciation of all their benefits may be an affectation.

The burden of our civilization [says Mr. Tawney] is not merely as many suppose, that the product of industry is ill-distributed, or its conduct tyrannical, or its operation interrupted by embittered disagreements. It is that industry itself has come to hold a position of exclusive predominance among human interests, which no single interest, and least of all the provision of the material means of existence, is fit to occupy. Like a hypochondriac who is so absorbed in the processes of his own digestion that he goes to his grave before he has begun to live, industrialized communities neglect the very objects for which it is worthwhile to acquire riches in their feverish preoccupation with the means by which riches can be acquired.⁸

Modern civilized man is at once stronger and freer than his ancestors because of the variety of his instruments, but his strength has been purchased at the cost of an increasing dependence, spiritual and bodily, upon those very tools. The aim of wise conduct must be the retention of all of the strengths flowing from our hosts of complex tools, but an increased emancipation of the mind and body from a subservience to such instruments. This is the problem of the wise use of modern industry.

THE MODERN PRESS

Among the tools which mankind has acquired in the course of its complex history, the press for printing by movable type, invented by Gutenberg in the fifteenth century, has had an important effect upon the conduct and affairs of men. Just as the introduction of papyrus rolls from Egypt into early Greece

⁸ Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society*, Harcourt, Brace, 1920, pp. 183-84.

created groups of solitary readers, so modern printing has shifted the major source of knowledge and information from the spoken word to the printed page. A modern scholar not only has gigantic libraries at his disposal, but is able to surround himself with books, pamphlets, and periodicals, and to have within the walls of his own home almost endless resources of knowledge on a wide range of scientific subjects, as well as a good deal of the world's literature and poetry.

As remarkable as these advantages are in the case of individuals, the effects of modern books and newspapers upon groups of individuals are even more striking. The large number of printed books and newspapers is probably both a cause and an effect of the wider spread of literacy in modern lands. The larger the amount of printed matter, the greater the incentive to learn to read, while the wider the range of readers, the greater the demand for more printed material. The result of this two-way causal influence has been the percolation of inexpensive books to almost every stratum of society above the moron, and the wide circulation of modern newspapers. Abandoning the earlier conception that a newspaper is (a) designed for a restricted circle of exceptionally cultivated and intelligent persons, and (b) that it is a commodity for which a reasonably sizable payment is to be made, newspaper producers in major western countries have adopted, to a greater or lesser extent, the contrary premises that a paper is (a) designed for everyone who can read (and some who can merely look at pictures) and (b) that it is a commodity for which practically nothing is paid. This shift in conceptions has involved necessarily a change in the contents of the paper, and a decrease in price from, say, eight cents (for early American papers) to one or two cents. The success which has attended these changes has had the effect of placing newspapers in the hands of almost everyone. For good or for evil, modern human beings in most countries have in their hands daily printed materials which may influence their conduct. A new channel has been opened through which

knowledge, fancy, hearsay, opinion (wise or foolish), information, misinformation, propaganda, etc., may flow. This coat of many colours is not the heritage of an isolated Joseph but also of his brothers, kinsmen, neighbours, and any chance stranger he happens to meet.

Chief among the manifold products of modern journalism is the sometimes rather highly seasoned dish called news. What is news? Mr. Walter Lippmann tells us that a series of events becomes news usually when they "make themselves noticeable in some more or less overt act. . . . Something definite must occur that has unmistakable form. It may be the act of going into bankruptcy, it may be a fire, a collision, an assault, a riot, an arrest, a denunciation, the introduction of a bill, a speech, a vote, a meeting, the expressed opinion of a well-known citizen, an editorial in a newspaper, a sale, a wage schedule, a price change, the proposal to build a new bridge. . . ."⁹ In each of these cases, events crystallize into some definite pattern. The prospect of a bankruptcy is not news; indeed, it would be libel to print such a report. Nor is rumour or report enough.

Yet even an overt act may not be news. The daily events in the lives of most citizens and groups of citizens are made up of conduct involving many overt acts. For these acts to become news, they must easily arouse interest. But what is an interesting act, and to whom must it be easily interesting in order to be news? A person finds an act interesting when his attention is quickly caught by it, when his emotions are stirred, and when he is able quickly to feel a sense of personal identification with the story or drama involved. Imaginative participation in a situation, or imitation of some character in a story or drama, is the basis of interest. When such participation is quick and clear, the interest is an easy one. *Hamlet* is an interesting play to a person who can imaginatively project himself into the story, possibly reliving the experiences of the Prince of Denmark,

⁹ Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, Macmillan, 1922, pp. 339-40.

possibly those of Ophelia, or possibly simply the wider environment of clashing motives and deeds. *Hamlet* is a play that is *easily* interesting only to those persons who quickly, clearly, and with relatively little effort achieve such participation. The overt act which forms the basis of the journalist's news story must arouse such an interest on the part of the readers.

In general, there are three, to some extent overlapping, types of newspapers. First, there is the large metropolitan daily which seeks the largest number of readers, being willing to lose the subscription of one relatively educated and cultivated citizen in order to gain ten readers who are chiefly interested in crime and sports. For this newspaper, news will inevitably centre about sensational events, murders, kidnappings, high-society life, corruption in politics, as well as the more striking types of business and political news. These matters are assumed to be most easily interesting to most people, and hence such items form the bulk of the news.

The second type of newspaper caters to the residents of a small town and the immediately surrounding countryside. Like the citizens of a metropolis, these people have an interest in the sensational, which is duly nurtured. However, the residents of a small town have a more immediate interest in local matters, in the lives of their fellow citizens, many of whom they know personally. Consequently news takes on a spatial dimension. *Where* the crime or bankruptcy occurs is more important in determining the news value than the mere fact *that* it occurs. Except for this difference, the easy interest of the readers follows the same pattern as that of most metropolitan readers: The same type of events on the national or international scene, the same interest in kidnappings, high-society life, and the like.

The third type of readers, proportionately more prevalent in England, in the opinion of newspaper producers, than in the United States, is the relatively educated and cultured group of citizens. Some papers are sufficiently anxious to reach the interest of such persons, to sacrifice a potentially larger, less

discriminating class of readers. These papers stress local, national, and international political and business events, a thorough editorial service, book reviews, the theatre, music and musical events, lectures, art, and the like. The producers assume that their readers are easily interested in such matters.

THE NEWS AND CONDUCT

Lippmann cautions us to remember that even the most competent reporters of news bring with them to the events a host of their own predispositions and prejudices. With no intended hypocrisy, they are apt to see, not the external, objective facts, but rather their own preconceived patterns or "stereotypes" of those facts. This warning, an echo of Bacon's theory of distorted ideas or "idols," is very timely in the twentieth century, when mankind's earliest faltering use of the techniques and tools of modern journalism is somewhat like a child's handling of dynamite. The distinction between facts and opinions, until recently matched in newspaper arrangement by the division between news and editorial comment, has broken down. With the most extensive fact-gathering agencies at their disposal that the world has ever witnessed, newspapers are unable to break through their own prearranged, stereotyped patterns of events to the events themselves. Their facts reek with opinion; their opinions masquerade as facts. An honest recognition of this situation has caused some papers to attempt to bring before the reader what Lippmann calls "a vivid sense of competing alternatives." At their worst, opinions dressed up as facts are the subtlest and most invidious type of propaganda.

Since the conduct of groups of individuals is affected by information and knowledge, the modern press, by controlling major sources of information, is able directly to influence conduct. This power ought neither to be exaggerated nor underestimated. An individual—or a group—who keenly discriminates among data and facts, and critically evaluates the resulting opinions and courses of action, will retain a measure of freedom

of thought and deed which no propaganda can undermine. Also, a man who has made his basic attitudes and activities habitual over a long period of years cannot be shaken from his course merely by a newspaper. Such a man realizes quite clearly the limited perspective and insight of newspapers. His discrimination at once fortifies him against the editorial biases of the hour and enables him to appropriate selectively from the newspaper the facts and views which are important. Again it is simply a question which is master, the man or the tool.

On the other hand, even the most critical reader or group of readers is dependent upon such agencies as the press for information on many topics germane to conduct. Without this relatively factual knowledge, the keenest type of critical ability is helpless as regards such wide areas of practical living as poverty, crime, war, government, industry, etc. While such knowledge can never in itself constitute wise attitudes and actions, it is a necessary basis for them. The power of the press lies in this fact. The press holds much knowledge of this kind; its failure to release it or its manner of releasing it is one major determinant of the conduct of individuals planning to act, or in the habit of acting, upon the news of the hour. Whether there is overt governmental censorship, covert censorship by the editors upon a hint from the government, or merely hypocritical lip service to the freedom of the press along with actual editorial suppression, in each case there is a barrier between even the critical reader and the facts. The first type of censorship exists in some countries all of the time and in all countries some of the time. The second type is probably absent only in the United States, although even in that country various devices are used at times to achieve the same end; for example, the government tells reporters in confidence what they might have discovered for themselves. The third type of censorship, in its grosser form, is described by Ibsen in his *An Enemy of the People*, and in its more subtle form by Anthony Trollope in *The Warden*. In the latter story, an editor with ineffable good

humour asserts that he cannot personally answer for what will appear in his columns. The official views of the paper require, in the interest of the freedom of the press, that his personal views be submerged in the general will of the paper. A well-known modern editor describes his cult as the "new priesthood of anonymity."¹⁰ Like power in government and industry, the influence of this anonymous group is frequently used widely in a prudent and wise manner. On the other hand, the anonymity of editorials offers a cloak for the expression of opinions which an editor, on occasion, would hesitate to place over his own name. Both facts and ideas reach a modern, discriminating newspaper reader through an elaborate refracting medium which at times he finds difficult to recognize as such.

For the less discriminating reader, the situation is considerably more precarious. In any event a prey to his own biases and emotions, and incapable of careful evaluation, such a person often finds his own blindness doubled by the influence of a newspaper. It is exceedingly doubtful whether the wisest presentation of facts and opinions by newspapers will serve to engender much prudent or wise living in a group of such readers. To the extent that a nation or a community has little anchorage in its own direct knowledge of the world or in such other sources of information as schooling, books, science, art, etc., probably a newspaper can do little or nothing to give them clear knowledge. The widest range of factual information accompanied by the most unbiassed editorials can do nothing in the absence of discrimination, evaluation, and moral excellence on the part of the readers themselves.

Sensational news is simply an exaggeration of attempts by many high-grade newspapers to catch and hold the attention of a wide range of readers. Apart from the lurid contents of sensational stories, the placard type of large leader or headline is simply a part of the attempt to reach indiscriminating readers.

¹⁰ John H. Finley in *An Introduction to Journalism*, edited by Lawrence W. Murphy, Nelson, 1930, p. 28.

In England, the overt act is printed on a sign near the newspaper stand; in America on the front page of the paper itself. Such devices, together with a tenor of writing designed in extreme cases to reach the mentally subnormal, make the impact of news upon the minds of many citizens highly emotional. News becomes a series of exciting events giving rise to what George Eliot called "that periodicity of sensations which we call post time." This spaced expectancy is in no way congenial to wise living. All quieter and more enduring sources of information pale in comparison with the arrival of stirring news. Old-time leisure, for many people, is gone.

In general, the benefits of the modern press considerably outweigh these evils. As with other features of modern life, the harm lies in the manner in which the press is sometimes used rather than in the tool itself. Even on the assumption that a certain amount of sensational writing is necessary as long as a larger public must be reached, the fact that so many ideas—wise or foolish—are able to reach so many people is essentially good. In 1644 Milton said: "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties." This principle is embodied in the American Bill of Rights. Even if modern newspapers contained much more insufferable foolishness than they do, the right to utter such foolishness is a right upon which actual and potential wisdom in group living rests. Any censorship, covert or open, which limits the right to speak foolishly, necessarily at the same time undermines the right to speak wisely. Any Platonic council, whether in the form of a government or an editorial staff, which tries to eliminate from the thoughts and lips and printing presses of its citizens "all songs and tales and discourses" save those which conform to its own set of right rules, destroys the very basis for wise group life. Even if the suppressed opinions appear foolish and harmful, and many of the sanctioned views eminently useful and good, such seeming benefits in group life are purchased at the cost of all genuine wisdom, the right of a person and a group

to do its own discriminating, evaluating, and choosing.¹¹ The foolishness which springs from the failure of an individual or a community to exercise its own powers of choice among competing melodies, tales, and discourses, is never on a par with the unwisdom resulting from an uncritical mouthing of the one "right" set allowed by the censor or editor. In the former case there is some hope of remedy; a foolish choice today may be followed by a wise one tomorrow or in later years. In the latter case there is no remedy, for the basis of discrimination and choice is itself removed. Nor does the fact that such censorship is always in the name of "right" opinion make the case less pitiable.

THE RADIO

The invention of the printing press brought a new world of ideas to any and every one who could obtain a book or newspaper and achieve literacy. Certain groups of people, however, continued to depend entirely upon a more primitive medium of expression, the spoken word, for all of their information. Children, illiterate and semi-literate persons remained outside the charmed circle of thoughts conveyed by print. With the invention of the radio or wireless telephone, even such people have new, direct access to many of the ideas in the world about them. This instrument makes words intelligible from afar to a wide group of listeners literate and illiterate. A child of three repeats with pride a word of a radio speaker. A child of eight sits fascinated before a receiving apparatus, following every word of a criminal drama. Many persons on the border line of literacy, or literate but with too little energy to follow the complexity of the printed word, grasp with easy interest the words from a radio, moved by every flexion of the voice, every change in pitch and tone, every pause and every stress—effects which the written word can convey with much greater difficulty, if at all. In the face of these developments, no one can contend that human conduct has remained or will remain unaffected by the

¹¹ Cf. above, pp. 56-57.

presence of the radio in the world. If the radio had but a temporary stall in Vanity Fair, it would not merit serious attention. Its permanence is as much an established fact as was that of the printing press in 1600.

The powers of the radio open the door to new possibilities of wise and foolish living. Freedom of speech gains a new and added significance. Millions of listeners to a political orator, salesman, news commentator, priest or pastor, now have facts and fancy displayed in a dizzy whirl to their bewildered minds. Injunctions to one or another type of life, one or another type of political and religious faith, one or another type of conduct, await anyone who has radio ears to hear. Nations can be united in an instant, attuned to the voice of a single speaker. All the slower modes of discrimination, evaluation, and deliberate choice seem thrust aside before words from a machine, words which bring the course of history down to a present instant. Many persons merely marvel at this latest tool of man. Others see in the radio another step in the expulsion of the human soul from a world already out of joint. It is too early to predict into which precise groove in human life the modern radio will eventually settle. It is not too early, however, to say that neither of these extreme attitudes represents the genial human way. The radio, like the newspaper, is an instrument. It is a means to ends wise or foolish. The mechanism is not at fault if human beings, potentially discriminating, evaluating creatures with inward lives and external aims, should turn it to the ends of salesmanship and propaganda. No tool is to be decried solely because someone wields it in a blundering manner. On the other hand, neither is the tool to be made an object of reverence or wonder. It was the human mind that made the fool. The inward realm of the spirit is not destroyed by becoming effective in the outer world of action. Only if we exalt that outward world at the expense of the very mind that has once more triumphed over it, only then do the words of the opponents of the machine take on pregnancy.

CHURCHES

Broadly speaking, a church is a society organized for the purpose of public religious worship. Hence, in a wide sense of the term, groups of Buddhists, Mohammedans, Jews, etc., are churches no less than Christian groups to whom the word is sometimes applied in a more restricted sense. In some Christian countries, some particular branch of Christianity is recognized legally and financially supported by the government, as the established state religion. In the United States, the Bill of Rights forbids any state religion, as well as any governmental measure in any way limiting the freedom of religious worship. Religious freedom means that the citizens of a nation shall be put under no legal constraint to worship in a Christian rather than a non-Christian church, in the church of one branch of Christianity rather than another, or, in fact, in any church whatsoever. This right is one of the most precious positive goals which a community can win for itself, and one requiring active attention for its preservation. In Plato's *Laws* we find formulae by means of which political authority may effectively coerce citizens in the matter of religious beliefs. Plato's recommendation for the treatment of atheists foreshadowed the harsh measures to which churchmen have at times resorted when given authority over the bodies as well as the souls of citizens. The burning of Giordano Bruno at the stake, the humiliation of Galileo, and the treatment of witches in Salem illustrate evils which can in extreme instances result from the possession of political authority by a church.

Political principles designed to assure religious freedom cannot and should not be designed to preserve or influence the spiritual well-being of the citizens in relation to religious matters. A person who chooses to become a member of no church, or of one type rather than another, does so, in each case, at his own risk, spiritual or otherwise. In some cases, a bias against all organized religion may be given to children before they are

mature enough to see both sides of the question. In other cases, children may be entered in, and educated to accept the tenets of, a church which they would not, as adults, select. They may discover in later life that they are committed, as church members, to beliefs and rules of life with which they heartily disagree, yet from which they cannot deviate without some stigma, or perhaps even the threat of severe punishment. All human beings inevitably run such risks. As long as children can be made to believe anything, they are helpless to escape foolish instruction and narrow indoctrination in religious or any other matters. For a government, however, to attempt to subject its citizens to any one set of religious convictions, or to bend them towards membership in any one church group, is to destroy the basis of all religious freedom.

Therefore, in a state where religious freedom prevails, every type of church, authoritarian and individualistic, has an equal right to thrive, limited only by other general political rights and laws. Freedom of religious worship carries with it corresponding obligations. No church can afford to direct its activities towards securing special political and economic privileges for its members solely on the ground of their church membership. Such activities by a church tend to call into being hostile groups whose criticism of such political activities easily passes over into an opposition to religious freedom.

The obligations which religious freedom imposes upon different, particular churches in no way mean that religious bodies ought not to take an active interest in the problems of political and social well-being, particularly in the problems of group meliorism. Nor does it mean that church charities should not to some extent be directed towards the particular welfare of church members. If a religious group can point with pride to the fact that none of its members is allowed to remain in poverty, this fact represents a notable achievement—provided, of course, that such welfare is not accompanied by an undue neg-

lect of other poor people in the community. Concerning what other social ends churches ought to seek, there is wide disagreement. Some churches actively fight communism. On the other hand, one Marxist¹² advocates enlisting the power of the churches on the side of labour in what he calls "war to the hilt" upon the capitalists and reactionaries. Such an anarchist as Tolstoi favours abandoning the churches altogether, while certain sociologists advocate turning the activities of churches more and more to problems of "group salvation," by which they mean applied sociology. Some churches attack birth control and every effort to make it possible in a community; others carry on crusades for the prohibition of alcoholic drinking. Some churches advocate pacifism in wartime; others have led the way in the promotion of various wars. Religious freedom assures to all churches the right to advocate and actively to promote any political and social programme. The only restraint must be self-imposed.

Among the ideas which have been prominent in the tenets of various Christian churches is the conviction that there exists a kind Heavenly Father, uniquely interested in mankind, and, under certain conditions, offering assurance of life after death for human beings, notably believers. This conviction and many others are evidence that churches deal with problems which far transcend matters of political and group well-being. If human beings are destined to have immortal careers under the superintendence of a personal God, surely this fact is very important. If a churchman—pastor or layman—has arrived at such a belief honestly and conscientiously (and unless he has done so he is not a true believer), this fact deserves serious attention and respect both inside and outside of churches. The spreading of such beliefs, and the way of life which they imply, must always remain the supreme purpose of churches. On the other hand, as long as human careers are (as is admitted by all) partly upon

¹² Heber Blankenhorn, in *Religion and Public Affairs*, edited by H. F. Rall, Macmillan, 1937, p. 55.

this terrestrial scene, churches ought to bend every effort to meet the major challenges of personal and group living.

The educational activity of churches in such matters is as broad as ethics itself. Unlike the group meliorist, the discriminating church member—particularly a pastor—is in a position to exercise a wider and more positive influence upon the lives of individuals than mere aid in overcoming evils. He can and ought to aid human beings to formulate and seek many positive goals—education, a successful career, marriage, friendship, etc.—as well as religious ends. In addition, a churchman, while concerning himself with such group problems as poverty, crime, industrial strife, etc., which require primarily prevention and remedy, can, and ought to, seek to promote the more positive values of good government, a more enlightened use of the press, and a wiser use of modern industry. When religious groups speak out in the name of various goals in human life—personal and group, negative and positive—they are apt to command a wider hearing than is given to any isolated individual. Whatever organized religion may offer its members in the way of additional, spiritual experiences and values, churches ought to play a major rôle in the search for wisdom in individual and group conduct.

GENERAL SUMMARY

Wisdom in group conduct is an empty conception unless it is considered as the crown of personal ethics. All ethical wisdom is literally the possession of individuals. Community moral excellence arises only when individuals apply their own personal wisdom in the search for such positive group values as good government, group economic welfare, a civilized use of machines, and education through the press, the radio, and the churches. Group problems do not solve themselves apart from individual thought and discrimination. Consequently all group ethical problems begin with individuals, with situations in which they behave wisely or foolishly. But social ethics also ends with individuals, for the ultimate test of the solution of all group

problems lies in the effects upon the character and conduct of persons in a community. Ideally speaking, the ethical welfare of a group as a whole consists of the welfare of each and every living person in that group, with the inner life counting as of greater value than externals, yet neither aspect being neglected.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

HAPPINESS AS THE FINAL END OF WISDOM IN CONDUCT

NO specific individual will be immediately concerned with all of the various situations, negative and positive, personal and group, which have been discussed in the preceding chapters. Every person who aims at wisdom in conduct will, however, be seeking one general end; namely, the most nearly complete life possible. All specific aims and purposes bound up with particular ethical situations are integral parts of an individual's total life of well-being and well-doing. This completeness of a life may be called happiness. It is not an accidental condition or a set of circumstances peculiar to any particular period of a person's career, nor is the happiness of one man's life entirely commensurate with that of another. Least of all is happiness a special kind of end or good, unrelated to any of the specific ends with which a person is occupied. On the contrary, the condition of happiness is essentially an harmonious integration of an individual's various concrete aims and purposes. A happy life is, in other words, a synthesis of wise ends actively pursued over a full span of years. In general, happiness is a life of wisdom in conduct, viewed in its completeness.

For some people a happy life turns out to be impossible because of one or more irremediable evils which are encountered. An imbecile or moron remains permanently cut off from a search for the types of goals which are essential to happiness. An idiot may have a very pleasant life but not a happy one. Likewise, some people remain throughout their lives so hopelessly sunk in poverty that any application of the term "happiness" to their lives becomes a mockery. Furthermore, illness and disease sometimes cut a person's life short, or cripple him

to such an extent that his days must be spent in a perpetual fight for mere existence. Failure in a career brings with it, for some people, tragic, unsurmountable difficulties which preclude happiness. Other persons become criminals and remain permanently blinded to every element of wise and virtuous living. In general, there are many evils which may highly restrict a person's happiness, or even reduce it to a vanishing point.

On the other hand, while some persons go through life relatively free from various evils, this fact is no guarantee that their lives are happy ones. There are many positive ethical situations upon which a person's happiness may depend. Play in childhood has important influences upon character, and hence indirectly upon an adult's total life of well-being and well-doing. Education likewise plays an important rôle in the determination of a person's total happiness. For many persons a happy life is affected to a large degree by their life vocation, in which some of their permanent habits are formed. Probably most important of all, a person's relations to his friends and family play a major part in the integration of his various aims and purposes which constitutes his happiness. His relations to his parents as a child, his married life with its manifold specific aims and experiences, and his relations to his friends and children carry important implications for his life as a whole. A marred friendship, a broken family, misfortune in the life of a child, and many other evils in personal life, show how closely linked a person's happiness may become with the lives of other people. In general, there are many positive values or goods in and through the search for which a person may realize the most nearly complete or happy life. In general, therefore, a happy life is not one of passivity and aloofness from the challenges of human experiences. The wise man will have ties with his fellows, knowing full well that all human relations may become the source of suffering as well as of joy. The happy life is likely to be strenuous and active, bringing with it achievements and successes, but also a consider-

able measure of failure and disappointment. It involves the kind of wisdom which creates new, positive values, not normally existing, or even supposed to exist, in the life of a particular person.

In a literal sense of the term, happiness is the possession of individuals. Yet the lives of persons are so intimately related to various factors in group life that in most societies few individuals stand any chance of attaining private happiness unless many of the problems of group welfare have been wisely met. Therefore, in a somewhat figurative sense, group happiness is the most general aim of wisdom in group conduct. Because of the existence of widespread evils, a community may collectively fall far short of group happiness, in spite of the existence of some few happy citizens. A society in which there is a good deal of poverty and unemployment has little opportunity, as a group, to turn its attention to more positive goals. In our modern world, the misuses of modern industry—irregular employment, inadequate wages, harmful working conditions, and child labour—close the door to individual happiness to large numbers of persons. Similarly, any community which fails to make available to the greatest number of citizens the many advantages of expert medical care, thereby stands poorly in relation to group happiness. Political corruption, crime, feeble-mindedness, and insanity are, likewise, barometers by means of which the absence of the well-being of a community may be measured. Lastly, a nation-state may achieve the elimination of many of these group evils only to plunge itself into warfare with other nations, and thereby jeopardize every phase of its national happiness.

On the other hand, the elimination of these various evils in the life of a community would represent group happiness only of a rather restricted kind. A more positive sort of community well-being must include the establishment of wise political processes, assuring effective government by the few in the interest of the many, guaranteeing certain basic political rights

such as freedom of speech, of the press, and of religious worship, and the right of a trial by jury. In addition, a wise government will seek to foster an increase in the total wealth of the nation, and to distribute it as widely and justly as possible. Furthermore, the wise community will try to assure to the greatest number of persons all of the fruits of modern industry. To mention more specific matters, community well-being will be forwarded by a wise use of the press and the radio, making available to large numbers of persons a world of ideas and civilized experiences hitherto the privilege of only a few. Finally, in a happy society, churches will be an important agency in forwarding the search for inward excellence and wisdom in conduct on the part of a large number of individuals. In general, happiness in group life will represent a synthesis of these many aims, negative and positive, in the life of a community. As in the case of individual happiness, the happiness of a group is its life of wisdom in conduct viewed in its completeness.

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL: ETHICS AND PSYCHOLOGY

Aristotle held that a man acts only when there are motives lying in his character which constrain or move him.¹ A man who is carried away by a whirlwind does not act. Therefore, strictly speaking, there is, in Aristotle's opinion, no such thing as a compulsory act, while animals do not act at all. More broadly speaking, Aristotle meant that one of the conditions of a voluntary action is that it proceed not under external compulsion, but at least in part according to a principle lying within the agent. The second requisite of a voluntary action is, in his opinion, that it involve a knowledge of the particular circumstances on the part of the agent. A special kind of voluntary act is one involving choice or purpose. All choosing is willing, but some willing is not choosing. Acts done on the spur of the moment may be voluntary or willed, but since they

¹ Cf. above, pp. 217-18.

lack previous deliberation they are not choices. Nor is willing mere wishing; for we may wish for the impossible or what can never be effected by our own agency, but we can will only what is possible and within our own power. Also we wish or want various ends, such as health, but we deliberate and choose the means to these ends. Choice, then, is willing after previous deliberation concerning matters of conduct which are within our control.

Now, Aristotle's theory of choice involves several crucial difficulties, some of which he himself recognized. Is a shipwrecked crew compelled to throw a cargo overboard to save themselves? No one would choose to perform such an act except to avoid a greater evil. Such acts Aristotle was contented to label mixed acts—voluntary in themselves, yet, under qualifying circumstances, compelled. In border line cases, the voluntary or compulsory nature of an act can be determined only by considering the state of the agent's mind at the time. Throughout his account of the will, Aristotle makes the assumption that there is, on the whole, a clear line of demarcation between acts which proceed from the agent and involve a knowledge of the particular circumstances, and those which he does either under compulsion, or involuntarily, *i.e.*, without knowledge of the circumstances. Aristotle never faced the paradox of volition; namely—if the agent has a knowledge of the circumstances he cannot avoid willing the particular act in question, while if he lacks this knowledge he is equally incapable of such willing; therefore, apparently in no case does he have a genuine pair of alternatives, and hence choice is impossible. Aristotle's omission of this problem causes some students² to hold that his views are really deterministic, *i.e.*, allow no genuine choice.

After Aristotle's day, the problem of the freedom of the will became a leading philosophical issue between the Stoics and the Epicureans. Epicurus believed that the atoms which compose

² Ottmar Dittrich, *Geschichte der Ethik*, Meiner, 1926, I, pp. 273-75.

the universe move to some extent fortuitously; similarly, the atoms composing the human soul follow no fixed path, and free choices by men are possible. The Stoics, on the other hand, stressing the immutable laws of nature, believed that man, as a part of nature, is bound by unbreakable laws, and any free choice is illusory. Strictly speaking, we can will only what we must. Saint Augustine, shifting the controversy to a theological plane, contended that mankind, in the person of Adam, was initially free. With Adam's Fall, however, all of his descendants became reduced by that act to a condition of unfreedom, from which escape is possible only by means of divine grace. In mediaeval philosophy, the debate concerned chiefly the problem of reconciling the divine foresight of God with enough freedom of will for man to make him morally responsible for his conduct. If God foresees Judas' deed, can Judas be considered morally culpable?

With the rise of modern mechanistic psychology, deriving more or less from the views of Hobbes, the issue took a very different turn. With certain noteworthy exceptions, such as the controversies centring about Calvinism, the issue was no longer between the believers in the free power of choice of man and the advocates of theological determinism, but rather between the former and the defenders of mechanistic determinism. As we have already noted,³ Hobbes sought to describe man's behaviour as it is, without raising the ethical question of how it ought to be. He sought to make psychology a descriptive study rather than one dealing with norms. The mental life of man he reduced to appetites and aversions, minute motions towards and away from objects. When in a chain of these minute appetites and aversions the last link is an appetite, overt motion towards the object follows inevitably; while when the last link is an aversion overt withdrawal occurs equally necessarily. In the former case, the last appetite is labelled "will," in the latter, "unwillingness." It is quite clear that such a description of the

³ Cf. above, pp. 76-78.

deliberations of man removes any vestige of a power of choice. We will simply what we find ourselves moving towards. Modern behaviouristic (chiefly American) psychologists have merely clothed the views of their master in modern apparel, appetites becoming adiences, aversions abiences, objects stimuli, thought and will merely aspects of conditioned behaviour. All knowing, discrimination, evaluation, and choice are put on a par with simple physiological "responses." As one phase of these attacks upon the theory of choice, criminologists, as we have found, have construed all crime as the outcome solely of antecedent conditions in the life of the criminal, his heredity, childhood environment, economic status, health, insanity, and the like.

On the other hand, theoretical defences of freedom of the will have not been wanting in modern times. Kant, believing that certain universal rules can be discovered in ethics similar to the Newtonian laws of physics, admitted one important difference between the manner in which these two sets of rules operate. "Everything in nature acts in conformity with law. Only a rational being has the faculty of acting in conformity with the *idea* of law, or from principles; only a rational being, in other words, has a will." A planet moves or a stone falls in conformity with Newtonian principles, but the planet or stone hardly *knows* that it is so bound. Man, on the other hand, acts not only in conformity with the laws of gravitation, to the extent that he is a member of the kingdom of nature, but he knows that he must so act. The very absence of choice which man finds in the careers of natural objects, including his own body, yields to him the idea of law. In the theoretical pursuit of science and philosophy, such knowledge is impotent to alter by one whit the universal reign of natural law. Theoretical reason proposes, but it does not dispose. In practical life, however, the idea of law presupposes the existence of a will or practical reason capable of acting in accordance with it. Man, then, in addition to being a member of the kingdom of nature and completely governed by its laws, is also a member of a king-

dom of ends, and in relation to this kingdom he has complete freedom, the power to act according to the laws of his own rational nature. Practical reason not only proposes, but also disposes. Such freedom of will is sometimes called self-determination. Upon these tenets, Kant erects his particular theory of conduct, which we have already considered.

William James has attempted to do justice at once to the claims of modern descriptive psychology and the demands of ethics for some power of choice in human beings. The essential phenomenon of the will is, he holds, the effort of attention. A person's mental life is essentially a stream of consciousness with ideas coming and going, passing and gliding, always shading imperceptibly into one another, always to some extent unified, and accompanied by "fringes." A person never wills that an idea come into his field of consciousness. The phenomenon of will operates merely to hold an idea once it has appeared, to make it strong, clear, and vivid, and capable eventually of the efficacy which passes over into "overt" conduct. The absence of will is simply the failure to make this effort of attention; it is the tendency to allow the idea to become weak, blurred, and dull, incapable of any efficacy, and hence sooner or later to allow it to pass out of consciousness.

Is the mind free to exercise or not to exercise this effort of attention? Can it exercise more or less of this effort which is called will? James's answer is quite conditional. If, he says, the amount of effort of attention is a fixed quantity, then the will is determined. In any particular case it will operate with a given strength, and the resulting increase or decrease of vividness of the idea (and *ipso facto* the occurrence or nonoccurrence of any overt piece of conduct) is completely determined. In this case not only is a person not free to call up ideas, but likewise he is helpless in any measure to alter the amount of their force once they have appeared. Their rôle in his thought and conduct follows inevitably from the fixed amount of effort of attention which they call forth. If, however, the amount of effort of

attention is a genuine variable, then the possibility remains open that a person may exercise more or less of it. While a person is not free to call up ideas, he is able actively to "attend" to the ones which have appeared, to hold or banish them, and to this extent to choose which ones will acquire sufficient vividness to pass over into conduct. In psychological descriptions of mental life, no variables are admissible. Consequently, James says, psychology must assume that the effort of attention is fixed, and man's mental life and the ensuing conduct completely determined. In ethical life—that is, in the life of practice—the contrary assumption must be made. There, says James, we must assume that the effort of attention is a variable, that we may exercise it to a greater or lesser degree, and, to this extent, that we may choose to follow or not to follow a train of ideas leading eventually to an overt action. Whether the assumptions of the psychologist or of the student of ethics are true in any final sense is a problem which James turns over to the highest court of appeal, metaphysics, before which the two studies are called upon to present their respective claims. This position is not unlike that of Kant.

As unsatisfactory as such suspended judgement is, we shall leave this problem as William James has stated it. Throughout this study the assumption has been that choice is a reality. Whether in the last analysis the self is a variable from which genuinely free choices can proceed, or whether, in fact, deliberation and choice merely involve the operation of one set of ideas rather than another to influence conduct in a determined fashion, the one or the other type of "choice" is at the basis of conduct. In the latter case, we must act *as if* choice were real. An old New England Calvinist was setting out into the woods one day with his rifle over his shoulder, when one of his friends asked:

"Brother Smith, why take along your gun? If the Lord has predestined that an Indian is going to shoot you out there in the forest, you can do nothing about it."

The old fellow replied:

"Brother Jones, if the Lord has predestined that *I* am going to shoot an Indian in those woods yonder today, I cannot go against his will."

In practice, determinism, whether theological or psychological, cuts both ways.

ETHICS AND PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is sometimes portrayed as the fairest of all maidens, the most worthy of being wooed, and the most difficult to win. Perhaps it would be truer to say that the kind of wisdom which the philosopher seeks is, if not the fairest, at least the most difficult to achieve. In any event philosophy, in the widest sense of the term, is a love of wisdom, while philosophizing is its active pursuit. The search for wisdom in conduct is, then, a kind of philosophizing carried on not merely by means of thoughts and words, but in the very art of living itself. The dialectic of Plato or the *theoria* of Aristotle is simply its final melody. But within the more general search for wisdom, Aristotle fashioned some of the special sciences—logic, physics, biology, psychology, economics, dramatic criticism, etc. Alongside these studies and ethics, he dealt with what he called first philosophy. This science, he held, if it is possible, deals with things in nature which are more basic than those considered by either physics or mathematics. It is no mere synthesis of the results of the other sciences, for it has its own proper problems more basic than those of all special studies.

Since Aristotle's day, first philosophy has come to be known as metaphysics. It seeks to determine the nature of man and his place in the universe. It represents our most basic attitude towards what is most basic in the universe. Depending upon the outcome of metaphysics, man is found to be either a small bundle of atoms on a minor planet, contemptible because of his very illusions of importance, or a central figure in a cosmic drama, with personality and values as its leading motives.

Metaphysics forms the very core of the search for general wisdom, as opposed to ethics as the search for wise conduct. Ethics, therefore, leads on inevitably to the study of metaphysics.

What are a few of the issues in that part of philosophy called metaphysics? They can, perhaps, be roughly displayed by means of an analogy. Suppose an inhabitant of Mars were to visit the earth and inquire in one of our leading western nations: "What is the real, essential nature of the government here?" Some people might tell him that the government consisted chiefly of policemen; others might say the legislature—Parliament or Congress; still others might say the executive—the Cabinet or the President; still others might say the judiciary; still others, some two or three of these branches; while finally, to his great bewilderment, others might tell him that the people really govern themselves. His problem would be to discover which of these answers is correct, to see behind the false ones, and to find the true; and he might fail miserably.

Now, the problems of metaphysics are something like the problem which the Martian would be facing, only much more complex. Students of metaphysics are seeking not the real, essential nature of a government, but the real, essential nature of the universe as a whole, including sticks, stones, cabbages, and kings. One major answer makes the assumption that the spatially and temporally great is the most real and basic. According to this answer, the fact that the masses of blazing suns which form our own nebula and countless others are larger, and have lasted longer, and will last longer, than the crust of the earth and everything on it, is evidence that these suns are more basic features of nature than the earth, or plants, animals, and men. On the earth, the mountains and rocks are larger and have longer past and future careers than living things, and hence they are more real. By the same line of reasoning, an elephant is more real than a man both because of his size and his longevity.

Another theory holds that life is the most basic and real

feature of nature. Plants, animals, and men are, because of their animate natures, more real than mountains, stones, and whirling planets. According to this view, however, man is essentially like animals and plants. These first two views are sometimes called naturalism.

A third view holds that the human mind is the most basic feature of nature. The queer little creature man, five feet in stature, dwelling on a minor planet in a minor solar system buried deep in the heart of merely one among countless island universes, is able to *know* all these and many other facts about himself and the gigantic physical universe which so far surpasses him in size and length of existence. This view is sometimes called humanism or idealism, or both.

Finally, a fourth major doctrine asserts that, acting in and through nature, a divine superhuman Mind has created, and superintends, the whole of nature and everything in it, including man. This Mind either transcends the confines of space or is present within and throughout the whole, or both. This view is called cosmic idealism.

As a part of his general search into the nature of reality, the student of metaphysics grapples with a host of more specialized questions. Is reality single and unified, or is it many and diversified? Are its most basic features fixed substances, or changing events and processes? Which is more intrinsic to the nature of things—space or time? Still more specifically, are there two different realities, mind and matter? If so, do they interact with each other? Is what is commonly called mind in fact only a type of matter or physical energy; or is perhaps matter in some sense merely a feature of mind? To what extent, if any, does the behaviour of planets, stones, animals, or men, follow fixed rules of causation? Does every event have a cause? If there is causation in nature, is it entirely mechanical—describable completely in terms of space, time, mass, and physical energy—or does purposive or “telic” causation operate in some parts of nature and possibly throughout the whole? Finally, is the

human self simple or complex, static or changing, mental or physical, free or determined in its conduct? These questions are among the major issues in metaphysics.

Just as our friend from Mars may have found himself unable to determine the real nature of a national government, so some students of metaphysics contend that our human knowing instruments are too weak to yield any answers to metaphysical problems. To try to demonstrate the truth of naturalism, humanism, or cosmic idealism, is, they declare, like going deep-sea fishing with a brook-trout line. Human minds are simply incommensurate with the reality which they are trying to know. Anyone who claims to have arrived at any final proof or exposition of any of these views is at once labelled an uncritical dogmatist. This motive of doubt leads some philosophers to throw up the search, and turn their investigation to the problem of the nature and scope of our given knowing instruments (minds, sense organs, etc.). Such an investigation into the nature and limitations of human knowledge has been quite widespread in modern philosophy, especially since the times of Locke and Kant. This study is called epistemology, or theory of knowledge, and presupposes a certain initial doubt concerning our ability to answer metaphysical questions. If epistemology is pursued with the avowed aim of showing that metaphysics is impossible, its outcome as well as its point of departure is sceptical. If, on the other hand, epistemological investigations are carried on with the conviction that some set of answers to metaphysical questions—naturalism, humanism, cosmic idealism, etc.—is the correct one, and that an adequate theory of knowledge would tell us which, then the search is critical and forms a kind of pre-metaphysics, a sharpening of our knowing tools prior to cutting into the very stuff of reality.

After all, the Martian's inability to know what is the real, essential nature of a certain human, political government does not mean that there is no answer to the question, but merely that the Martian could not reach it. If metaphysics is taken

seriously, there is a belief on the part of the student that there is *some* ultimate nature to things even if neither his, nor any other human mind, has yet grasped it. This attitude towards metaphysics, and the necessity for an antecedent search into the nature of human knowledge, represents man's deepest challenge in regard to theoretical wisdom. That a study of the problems of human conduct cannot await the achievement of such wisdom, has already been suggested.

The part of philosophy, however, which is most intimately related to ethics is theory of value, the study of the nature and generating conditions of values. Two general problems are fundamental in this investigation: (1) Are values real features of nature, apart from any recognition of them by human beings? An affirmative answer to this question means a realistic theory of value; a negative one is called subjectivism. If a realistic view is upheld, a second problem arises: (2) Is there one, unique, absolutely accurate standard to which all particular values conform? An affirmative answer to this question means the doctrine of absolute value; a negative one involves the theory of the relativity of values.

The theory of absolute value holds that values are genuine aspects of nature, and that among all competing criteria for measuring values there is one standard which is absolutely correct. All values must, in the final analysis, be interpreted in terms of this one standard. Like the one correct metre stick in Paris, made of a certain metal and kept at a specific atmospheric pressure and temperature, there is one true type of value. Just as all other metre sticks are exact or inexact to the extent that they agree with, or diverge from, the one correct stick, so all values are genuine to the extent that they are identical with the one correct norm. The Platonic theory of forms or Ideas is a leading example of this doctrine.

In opposition to the conception of absolute value, there is the relativistic theory which agrees that values are real aspects of nature, but rejects the notion that there is any one single

standard of measurement. Goods, evils, beauty, utility, etc., are real features of objects, persons, conduct, and human experience, apart from being recognized as such, yet they are in every case relative to particular situations, circumstances, or contexts. While Aristotle launched a strong attack upon the absolute theory of the good, he held that good and evil are natural and not merely conventional ideas.

Unlike both varieties of the realistic theory, subjectivism holds that values depend exclusively upon a recognition of them by human beings. This view is perhaps clearly illustrated by the story of the Austrian financier who wielded an enormous power in the banking circles of his day. On one occasion he was sitting in his office when a young man entered and showed him some shares of stock which he had just purchased. The great man looked at them and remarked quizzically that they were not worth the paper they were printed on. The next day, on the bourse, that was all they were worth. His word had been sufficient to reduce their "value" to practically nothing. The subjectivistic theory of value asserts that nothing is good or bad, positively or negatively valuable, but thinking makes it so. Goods and evils are such only because they are believed to be so.

Unlike each of these three main conceptions of value, the general philosophic position upon which the ethics of situations rests is a relational theory of value. All ethical values are component parts of the total "doing" situation, including a person, his motives, passions, deliberations, and acts, as well as the objects and other people involved in his conduct. The value in each of these phases of the total ethical situation derives its nature from the whole. Consequently, in the last analysis, ethical values are determined by the structure of relations within the total ethical situation. While the relational conception of values is different from the absolute, the relativistic, and the subjectivistic theories, it has certain affinities with the second of these. The various goals or ends of conduct are relative to the

specific situations in which they are found, yet in no case are ethical values, positive or negative, deserving of search or avoidance merely because they are actually sought or avoided. Disease was present as an evil long before any effective steps were taken to eliminate it. It is not the awareness of values that constitutes their nature; they depend upon a wider set of relationships of which recognition is only one element. Whether such an object as coal in the ground is valuable apart from even a potential human use is a difficult question. Beyond the realm of human experience, perhaps all values melt away, but then again perhaps they do not. This is a metaphysical question, pregnant with meaning for ethics, but one which is not easily decided. The sole assumption of the theory of wisdom in conduct is that within the ethical situation, values are real enough; they do not, in that situation, derive their meaning exclusively by being apprehended by human beings, but operate, frequently undetected, to influence the lives of men.

Philosophy is concerned also with esthetic values, types of beautiful persons, natural scenes, and objects of art, tragic and comic plays, poems, literature, architecture, symphonic, choral, and chamber music, operas, etc. In general, the same major problems arise in esthetics as in ethics: Are esthetic values—beauty, ugliness, sublimity, etc.—merely relative, or are they determined by one absolute standard; are they in the mind only or also in nature? More specifically, the consideration of esthetics entails an investigation of particular situations, varying in the lives of different people, and concerning art objects of various kinds, as well as persons and natural scenes. In a study of beauty in art, the total esthetic situation is treated: (1) the creative artist; (2) his idea; (3) his materials; (4) his product, the art object; (5) the observer or audience; (6) the manner of experiencing or appreciating the object; and (7) in some cases, an interpretive performer, as in drama and music.

Finally, the possibility of the existence of holy persons or relations raises a series of parallel questions. Do some human

relations involve elements of value even surpassing those found in the total ethical situation? Is the relation between mother and child perhaps more than wise or good? Do the inward lives or even the outer lives of some people involve values which are more aptly called holy than virtuous and wise? Do our great religious teachers, Christ, Buddha, Confucius, and others, come bearing merely tidings of wise human living, or do they embody in their characters and teachings an even deeper value—holiness? The study of the possibility of holy persons and relations, as well as the problem of whether holiness is human or superhuman, concerns the third major portion of the theory of value. That study begins also with human situations, some of them humble and mean. Whether it carries us beyond the total human situation into a realm in which we no longer see so many things through a glass so darkly, is a question to which the present writer does not pretend to have an answer. It would seem, however, that a hope for these things is more justified than a faith in them. It may be suspected that none of the problems of philosophy is entirely unrelated to the same queer creature who is occasionally wise and often foolish in conduct, a human person. On this point, however, as on all others, let us not forget Confucius' injunction that we remain learners.

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